

Speaking For Myself



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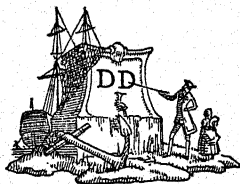
*A Determined Charge
at Close Quarters*

STEWART EDWARD WHITE

Speaking For Myself

ILLUSTRATED BY

DAVID HENDRICKSON



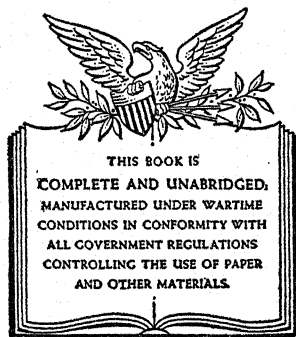
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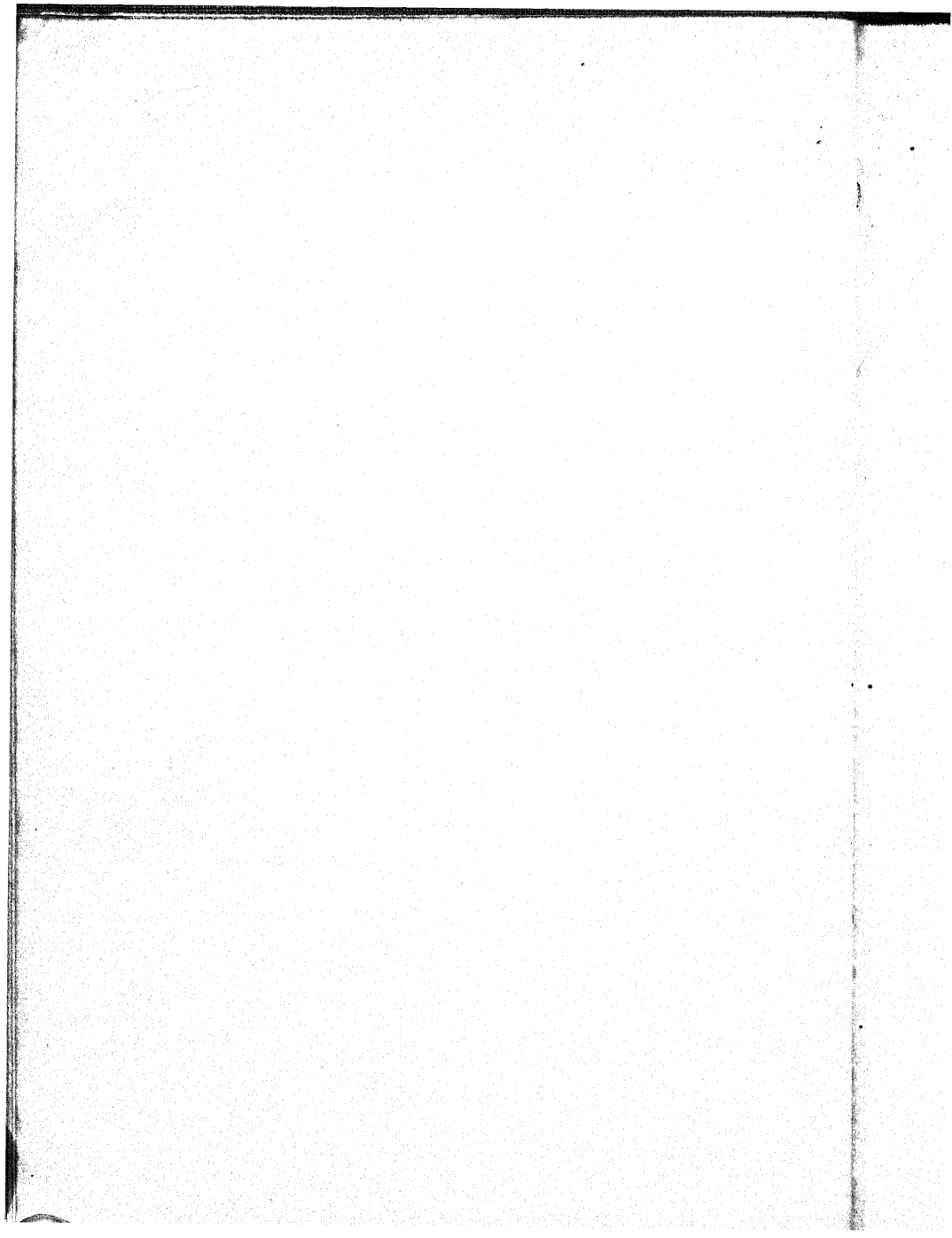
BY STEWART EDWARD WHITE

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FIRST EDITION

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Self-Protection against Nurses



Self-Protection against Nurses

I

I AM, AT THE MOMENT, in a hospital. On entering I was presented with a great variety of information, both written and oral. This, however, was all issued by the authorities. I was given nothing helpful from the point of view of the patient himself. It is with a view of remedying this deficiency that the following field notes—or should it be bed notes?—are submitted.

To the visitor, bringing sweetness and light to some friend, nurses are like Negroes and Chinese—they all look alike to him: a combination of starch, complexion, and apparently a higher average of both health and pulchritude than may be observed in an equal number of females elsewhere. This homogeneity is deceitful and superficial. Merely a casual study will disclose that they vary in function, in standing, and in species. The following out of these differences down to the split-hair distinctions of the subspecies can be of practical interest only to the closet naturalist. As the purport of this monograph is strictly utilitarian, the author will make no such attempt; nor will he more than mention in passing the subhuman varieties that will appear to our patient only

at such rare intervals as to afford him no opportunity for the employment of any techniques that may be set forth in this work. They may be identified by their caste mark of blue pelage and a rather scared look of the eyes. An English treatise entitled *On the Management of Rabbits* is recommended to those whose curiosity may lead them to further examination of the *Student Nurse*.

Nor does he need more than command of passive though wary obedience to the swarm that will disturb his first dream of a Nice, Long, Comfortable Rest. It is as well to discover thus early that their ain't no such animal. No sooner will he settle down comfortably than another of these young persons will appear to jab a needle into his thumb, or tie a bandage around his arm, or demand peremptorily an at-the-moment-impossible "sample," or—if all else fails—to shut off his bravely intelligent attempts at light conversation with a thermometer. There will be still others, who will merely look in for a moment or so, to smile sweetly and to introduce themselves as in charge of something or other—dietetics and anesthetics are about all he will understand. He need not strain his mind over them; he won't see them again. He should just enjoy the sweet smiles and their remarkable easiness to look it. There seem to be also Floor Nurses and Corridor Nurses, Elevator Nurses and Front Step Nurses, and Back Yard Nurses and Desk Nurses, all

of whom he will vaguely gather are to be somehow connected with his destinies. Everything but plain Nurses: none of them are plain. He should simply leave 'em lay. He can't get at them. Let 'em manage themselves. Concentrate. Two only should enlist his scientific attention. These will in due course appear. Wait for them. They are

- (a) The Day Nurse.
- (b) The Night Nurse.

Of these there are two distinct species. One is fortunately so very rare that only great ill fortune will bring a specimen to him. Still the patient should be informed of their marks of recognition solely as a measure of self-protection. They cannot be managed. But two recourses are possible.

- (a) Murder—the simplest, but least practicable.
- (b) Instant flight—but expensive and hazardous, because they have your clothes.

This is the upsy-daisy variety. They may be instantly identified by their use of the First Person Plural when they mean you. How are we this morning? How can you know how she is? Have we much pain? Considerable: principally in the neck. Have we had a bowel movement today? Doggone it, they are your bowels, not hers; why should she claim them? No, if you get an upsy-daisy you'll have to roll your own. Some painless form of suicide is probably indicated.

Nurses, as a rule, however, are kind, attractive, helpful, charming, and personally agreeable. It is only their training which has warped them. Their idiosyncrasies are vocational. They are no more blameworthy than was in former days the carborundum worker for his coated lungs; or the victim of any other complex for his uncontrollable psychic reactions. We should meet them, in no spirit of combat or resentment, but with the same kindly attitude of mind that animates the social altruist who ameliorates the working conditions of the laborer, or the psychiatrist who uses his indirections to bring a complex to light and under control.

Some of these complexes—for such they are—are harmless and should be indulged as affording an innocuous outlet. The Thermometer Complex is a very good example, as it is at the same time one of the most persistent and least deplorable. No succession of 98.6° entries in the chart can discourage. With a renewed hope that in time becomes almost pathetic, your nurse will return, after each failure to obtain from you a change of even a tenth degree, to stick the thing in your face. Do not seek for a rationale in this. At worst it is probably merely a nervous reflex; at best it indicates an admirable quality of persistence and hope which, applied to something sensible, like fishing, would prove valuable. Let 'em do it without either comment or objection. It soothes them, and may possibly keep them from thinking up something

much more disagreeable. Your author frowns on the expedient of a surreptitious match held under the mercury bulb. This, to be sure, might give them the joy of justification of an unexpected nibble; but the gratification might be both upsetting and unwholesome.

Another, perhaps not so admirable, graft of training on natural disposition is a certain miss as to exact veracity. This must not be treated as malicious. This is not going to Hurt, is one of these. Or a perfectly true statement that turns out to be a skilled evasion. For instance, you will be encouraged by a promise that three days after your operation you will be permitted this-or-that privilege, or will feel thus-and-so. At the stated time you will confidently demand the stated boon.

"Not until tomorrow," they tell you brightly.

"But you said three days," you protest.

"That's right; three days."

"Well," you demand with rising indignation. "Well," you begin again more moderately as she begins to finger her thermometer, "I was operated on Wednesday, wasn't I?"

"Yes."

"And this is Friday?"

"Yes."

"Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. How many is that?"

And then you find out that they don't count the day of the operation. That's thrown in. A kind of bonus.

Like the extra shilling in the pound sterling that makes the guinea. It's an old Spanish custom. It's always been done, you know. Parenthetically, you won't get anywhere trying to work it on your hospital bill.

Others of these complexes are not merely annoying: they are fraught with menace. Nurses have a mania for rolling. They are always wanting you to roll. You will not want to roll; indeed, rolling is about the last thing in the world you will want to do. The reason for this mania—for it is indeed that—is obscure. Some experts have advanced the hypothesis that it is strictly a commercial expedient designed to further business; the beds are high and so narrow that one complete half roll will poise you on a perilous edge. I do not hold with this hypothesis. It must not be forgotten that fundamentally, in spite of appearances to the contrary, the purpose is benevolent. I am more inclined to ascribe to it a religious significance, though I am unfamiliar with the tenets of the Holy Rollers. Installment-plan bathing is another. And, of course, it is never safe to answer a knock by any other challenge than the old "Who goes there? Friend or enema?"

A catalogue of complexes is not within the scope of this treatise. They will be promptly and easily recognized, and their discovery and classification will agreeably supplement the few and simple pleasures possible in your condition of servitude. One point should in all fair-

ness be noted: they are one and all based on experience of what is good for you. No doubt at all: they are good for you. Or would be did they take into consideration the state of your soul as well as the state of your body. Their perfection is too rarefied for the former. Unless you are that supine creature, the Model Patient, your soul leaks too much to hold a chemically pure solution of what is good for you. It requires a dilution of the unregenerate.

There is also this consideration. A student nurse entering upon training begins with a fundamental of benevolence toward suffering humanity; which is a valuable, an indispensable ingredient of her usefulness. Without it she is no nurse. In the growing fascination of training—was that an echo? It sounded like Oh yeah!—in the growing fascination of training, I repeat, this becomes, not destroyed, but overlaid by a crust of pure efficiency, pure technique. Her patient is not a person but a case, a number. This is a perilous stage. This is where complexes are born. Her problem is that of all evolution, that begins with simplicity, rounds a circle through complexities, back to the starting point of simplicity again, but with the enrichment of its journey. The danger is of sticking halfway; of failing in return to that original benevolence; of remaining perched high and superior at the cold, clear apogee of admirable but bloodless techniques. If that is where your nurse is at the moment, here

is where you come in. You can, in your feeble way, do your mite toward helping her down.

How? By tarnishing the clear, bright integrity of some of these efficiencies. By preventing her from doing you too much good. By gently leading her to the realization that you are a poor, weak mortal without any but lip desire for perfection. By persuading her, through example, that the soul as well as the body must be ministered unto; and that sometimes the soul is best saved by the surreptitious naughtiness of small, harmless omission or evasion. Nothing serious, mind you! I counsel no mutiny against sacred shibboleth! But a realization of the spiritual comfort of *not* being roused to have your back rubbed for once, even at the small physical discomfort of an aching back! I knew a young woman once who, immovably on her back from a severe abdominal operation, nevertheless so strongly yearned for the immensity of stars that her urgency—and her very great charm—so worked its magic that four nurses and two orderlies acceded to lawless conspiracy, so that against all rule and discipline they transferred her, flat, to the “dead wagon,” and secretly to the roof of the hospital where she drank her fill of the “high inexpressibilities.” This, from the point of view of the essential simplicities which occasionally justify assassination and revolution, was all to the good. But unfortunately this young person was possessed also of an impish spirit of adventure, with which madness she

infected the faithful six who were now her slaves, so that the day came when outraged authority ended its search at a corner drugstore two blocks down the street, where were the four nurses, and the two orderlies, and the young lady flat on the "dead wagon," carousing merrily on ice-cream sodas. The consequences I shall not set down, as I am averse to describing scenes of bloodshed.

I am far from endorsing any such performance; and anyway I doubt if you or anybody else possesses that young person's persuasive charm. I do not go so far as to advise any overt conspiracy against the doctor, though I am not wholly convinced as to the doctor's ultimate wisdom. Or perhaps I should say I am fearful that he does not take my individual case as seriously as he should. He seems to me at times more daring than the young man on the flying trapeze. Take stitches, for example. No anatomical arguments can convince me that he doesn't take them out altogether too soon. What does he think is going to hold me together? It isn't reasonable to suppose that after so brief a time—even not counting the day of the operation—anything has happened to justify any such procedure. Especially if I am to indulge the nurse's rolling complex. I'm not even tied up as securely as a Christmas package. Someday some patient will burst out like a wet paper sack, and then what? But that wasn't what we were talking about.

What you are after is modification of rigidity, a break of routine. When one thing follows another too inevitably, the succession may attain to the destructive beat of a column of soldiers crossing a bridge, or the maddening reiteration of a modern jazz band. Someday, when we have all had our hospital experience, someone is going to be elected President on a platform of the Six Day Week for Patients. And then the nurses will come into the room—occasionally, not too often, for routine is essential—saying brightly, "Heavy, heavy hangs over thy head. Guess what!" and the patient will guess whether it's enema or alcohol rub, instead of knowing only too well. And at rare, unstated intervals the reason for the peal of joy bells through the corridors will be explained to the eagerly waiting sufferers—"No bath today!" Under the present system the days are as alike as G-men movies.

That, however, can come only after a slow evolution. The most you can do is to contribute, in your feeble way, a few small bits.

To this end the Flat Refusal is no good. You may think you are getting away with it, but you are not. You are merely placing yourself in the way of acquiring much varied and curious knowledge of how many ways they know of getting the same result indirectly and much more disagreeably. And anyway, the moment you get cross they think you're getting better; and the mo-

ment they think you're getting better they think up more things to do. The Flat Refusal is out.

The Pathetic Appeal to the nurse's better nature is also out. In the first place, you are not near so pathetic as you think you are. In the second place, the nurse's better nature should not be roused: it also takes itself out in doing more things, not less. Just stir one up to think you really are an object of pity and see what happens to you! You may be entirely convinced that you are much "too sick to be nursed," but keep it to yourself.

Diplomacy is sometimes moderately successful. But its effect is self-limiting for the reason that diplomacy requires a mental alertness and energy which, in the circumstances, you do not possess. If you were well enough to be an effective diplomat, you would be well enough to leave the hospital. There was, you may point out, the case of the young lady. Take my word for it. If you must test diplomacy, do not try it on anything more serious than, say, a substitution of tomato juice for oranges, or a short postponement of lights-out while you hear the rest of the prize fight on the radio. Diplomacy is small-game ammunition. And anyway all hospital rooms have built-in lie detectors.

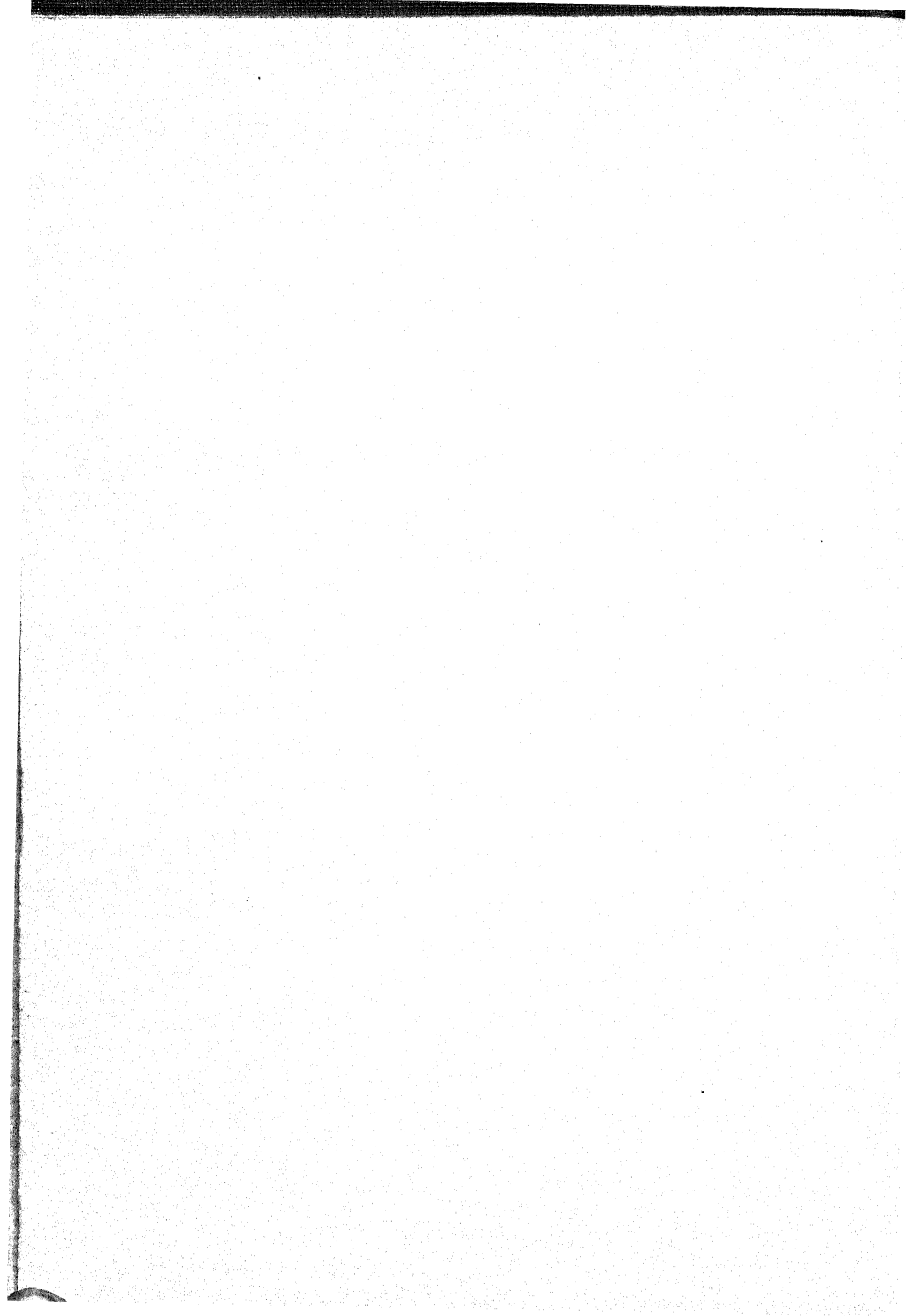
What can you do? It seems hopeless. There is one small chink in the armor of routine. If there is one thing that pleases them more than another it is to have you sleep. That, it seems, is Good for You. They are always

urging you to "a little nap." Whether or not this is to free them for a crap game in some mysterious lair of their own, I am unable to determine. Surely they must know that the human system can absorb only so much sleep. Perhaps they have come to the idea through experiments on dormice and dogs, just as they have come to dietetic theories by trying it out on rats. The logic is faulty. Seems to me all they've proved is how to grow healthy rats. Who wants healthy rats? I had always thought the idea was to poison as many as possible. Anyway, such is the fact. Utilize it. Sleep as much as you can, of course, but when sleep gags you—and things seem imminent—play possum. You can often postpone things quite a while that way.

One warning: never open your eyes suddenly. You might think yourself alone, but part of the student nurse's training is to cultivate the ability to materialize out of thin air. I think a preliminary requirement is a preparatory course in Advanced Spiritualism. Always take a reconnoitering peek through your lashes. In all probability you will find her there, looking down at you fixedly with all the patient, restrained eagerness of a manerly dog awaiting your first movement to bark his morning greeting. By this simple method you can often gain substantial postponements. Sooner or later—and not very much later either—your mind's ear will catch the inexorably approaching clank of good old iron routine.

There is not much to do after all; but you may as well do it. I once knew a man so completely paralyzed that all he could do was to move one finger. Instead of giving up, he decided that he'd move the finger. By and by he could move two fingers. Eventually he got well.

I'm about ready to leave this hospital. My nurse has been a grand nurse. There isn't a drop of upsy-daisy in her whole circulation. I haven't done her a bit of good. She's been onto me every minute. In a matter of chicken broth at an unpropitious time she even indulged me by joining in a small—a very small—conspiracy against routine. At the time this episode seemed to me to fly the banners of victory. In the light of consequent and lamentable result I now see the concession to be inspired, not by feeling of conspiracy at all, but by what might be called a Higher Wisdom. It emptied me for the time being of all desire to conspire; as also of about everything else.



The Little Bag



The Little Bag

II

THIS IS—or was—one of my Minor Grouches, until I figured it out.

Families are of two kinds, depending on whether time or space presents to them the greater problem. When one of the partners is always late, always "ready in just a minute," congenitally unpunctual, the other partner is inclined to go to the other extreme. He prefaces 99.44 per cent of his remarks by the phrase: "My dear, it is time to—" Then the motto of that couple is Stimeto; and that is a stimeto family. If, however, the time ratio is all right, but one of the couple is inclined to leave undone that thing which should be done, or—worse—to do the thing oddly or wrongly or bone-headedly, then that is a Whyncha family. Whyncha do this? Whyncha do that? Whyncha do it this way?

I think I'd rather belong to a stimeto family than to a whyncha family. Most wife murder comes from the whynchas. Some of our *à la carte* matrimonialists who have tried both have confessed to me that to them the incentives seem about equal, but obviously their analytical powers have been blunted by suffering. A whyncha

is nagged into this final and drastic action. A stimeto, on the other hand, *has to do the nagging* if he wants to get there before the salad, or the second act, or whatever it is. Difference between power through repression and the dissipation of energy—consult any psychologist. The incentive may be as powerful in both cases, but one has a chance to blow off and the other hasn't. Then, also, I think, the deflecting influence of the counter-irritant must be considered. I refer for the moment to the Little Bag. This influence is much more potent with stimetos than with whynchas.

You know what I mean. Every woman has one, made out of tapestry, beads, gold mesh; embroidered, rhinestoned, bediamonded, or just plain. Lack of pockets; impossibility of concealing even a handkerchief, let alone a compact, a lipstick, a cigarette case, a lighter, six buttons, and a stubby pencil, now that the fashion in figures, gowns, automobiles, and electric refrigerators is streamlined. That is what they tell you. But I've lived, man and boy, since the bustle days, and I've seen styles that could have hidden a hand organ and a monkey and no one the wiser; and they had then also their Little Bags!

Now no one could possibly object to this in itself. The old trappers, the Mountain Men, had their Little Bags. They called them their "possible sacks." But they did not lug them around in their hands and leave them places. They carried them firmly attached to their belts, and so

they were a source neither of worry nor of irritation. If, for some feminine reason which has undoubtedly been pointed out to me, but which for the moment escapes me, that is impossible, then how about a gadget like those little automatic winches with which fat women hitch eye-glasses, with a chain, to their bosoms? So that everywhere that Fanny goes the bag is sure to go? No; I know they won't. But I like to dream on.

Dinner at eight. We are at last in the car. The instrument-board clock is at eight-fifteen. Movement of slight consternation; tentative frisking of person; fumbling of immediate vicinage, becoming more and more frantic. "Oh, we'll have to go back! I've left my Little Bag!"

The party is over. It really has been over for a half-hour, but the poor fellow's suggesting grimaces to Mrs. Stimeto have only elicited from her a bright, assenting smile, but no action. We've said good-by. We have arisen from our chairs. The women say good-by again. We move into the hall. They say good-by once more. At the last split second one of them introduces a brand-new topic of conversation. Business of standing first on one foot, then on the other. More good-by. At long last the door closes behind us. A keen ear could detect the click of the switch as the lights go out, and a first-class clairvoyant could easily sense the smooth, sweet mental divestment of those who have done their damndest and can now retire to relaxed domesticity. (Yes, I know we

are popular; but I'm talking about the end of the party, not the beginning.) "Oh! We'll have to go back. I've left my Little Bag!"

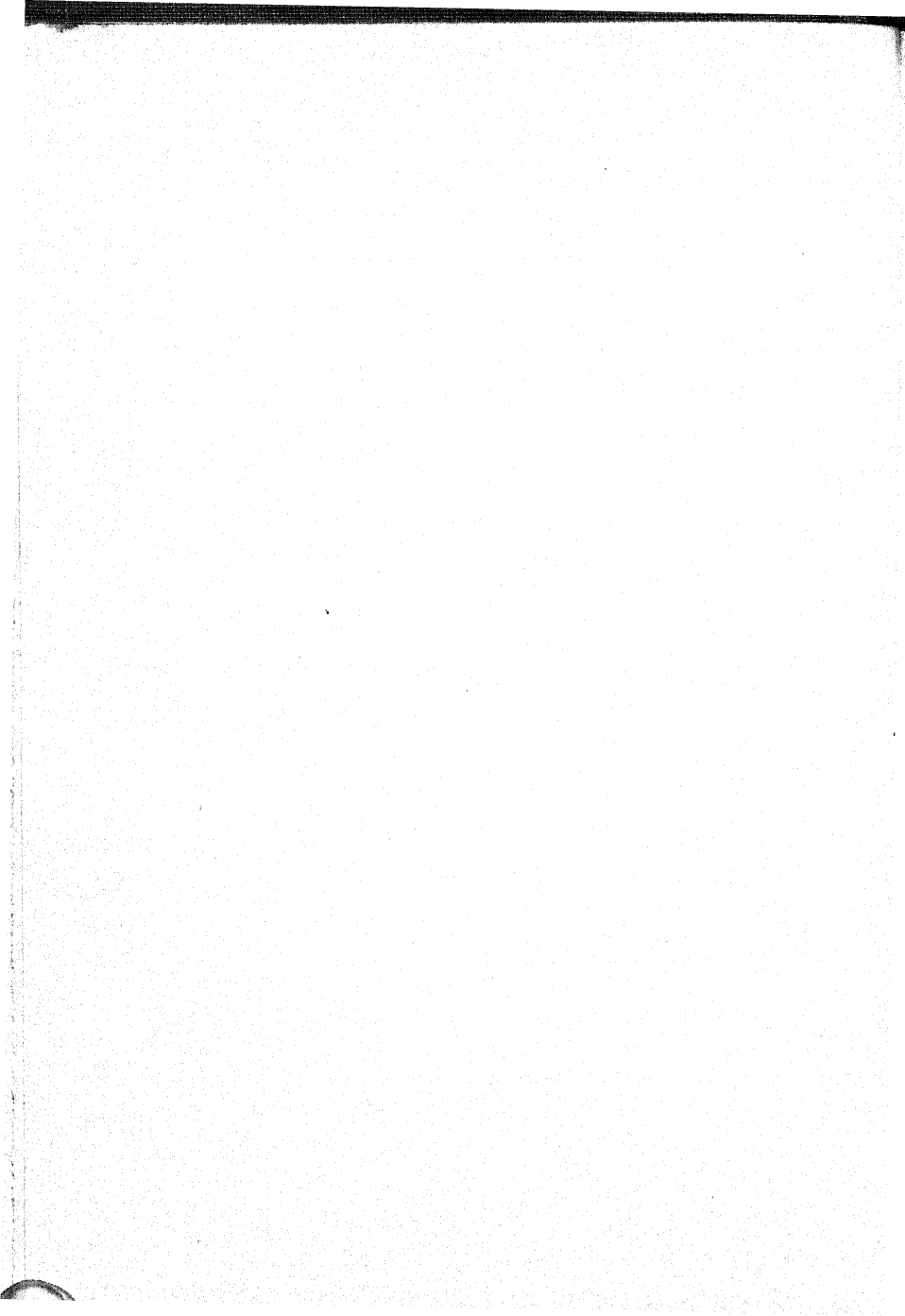
The movie is around again to where the hero hangs one on the heroine's chin. That is where we came in. Business of groping in the dark, slowly and painfully, past twenty knees. Stumbles, whispered apologies impatiently received, people craning their necks. The aisle at last! The lobby! The doors! "Oh, I've left my Little Bag!" Ushers! Flashlights! More craning necks! Curses, muffled and otherwise.

Now naturally it would seem at first glance that the Little Bag would intensify the stimeto motive to murder. But such is not the case, as any deep student of Gracie Allen or Stan Laurel would be able to tell you. One stimulus negatives the other in opposing vibration, so to speak, so that the final result must be that utter and cosmic, helpless and despairful acquiescence so well exemplified by Messrs. George Burns and Oliver Hardy, respectively. But in this attitude is no—there can be no—dynamics for homicide.

This, then, is why the death rate is so much higher in the whynchas than in the stimetos. By their very natures the whynchas are efficient. The desire to impart and to impose that efficiency is the thing that makes them whynchas. They are efficient in every way; so efficient that they deprive themselves of what would be their best

protection; so efficient that *they never leave their Little Bags!*

It has taken me some time to work this out. I hope you appreciate it. If you are a stimeto, it ought to be a great comfort to you.



Pity the Poor Author



Pity the Poor Author

III

IT IS TO ME a curious thing that so many people look on the job of authorship as so worshipful. I mean the job, not the individual. Nobody writes fan letters to, or gives afternoon teas or evening receptions for, or brags about knowing the mill run of doctors, say, or lawyers, or clergymen, or dentists, or mechanical engineers, or other whatnot professions. And this is true, though to a lesser degree, even of the other so-called artistic professions, such as acting or dancing or painting or sculpture. It is not sufficient merely to practice them in order to rate the bated breath. A man must have really accomplished something; be himself outstanding from the mere practitioners. But if one has ever, with fair regularity, produced signed copy that has been printed on glazed paper or between covers, he has become an Author, and automatically through that title alone—not necessarily through his work or personality—he seems automatically to rate a particular attitude toward himself by a very large proportion of his world.

This is a peculiar thing. But it is true. I speak from no pride of profession, for to me it is more marvelously cunning to assemble the forces of nature in the performance

of a complicated bit of mechanics than to string together a line of words in the expression of some idea that probably does not matter. I speak from dispassionate and curious observation extending over a great many years. And, furthermore, I am going to venture the guess that in so speaking I am voicing also the secret wonder of a great many of my fellow craftsmen.

I believe most of us feel a little guilty of the special kudos that has been made perquisite to the profession, as a profession. I believe the majority of writers experience an inward deprecation at its manifestations, though we are human—appearances to the contrary notwithstanding—and no more inclined to be shrinking violets than the rest of mankind. I am talking, not about genuine and discriminating appreciation of sincere effort, but of what might be called shotgun adulation.

You think I exaggerate? Of course. You are a sensible person, with a due sense of proportion. When some good lady informs you ecstatically that she is giving a tea for South, the Author, you mutter to yourself, "Oh yeah?" and decline. Possibly you even get a complex and take to the tall timber whenever a writer looms in the offing. But, being a sensible person, you are in a minority—a highly desirable minority. Thank heaven you exist, for you are a refreshment and a solace to the soul of the poor devil who through you preserves the sanity of his outlook.

Yes, I hasten to acknowledge sadly, there are some writers who lap it up. Let us not speak of them. Secret: because of them many of us, too, when we can, take to the tall timber when a strange writer looms in the offing, and lurk behind trees until we can size him up and be sure he is human. Nothing arouses darker suspicions than the simple statement, "Smith is a writer too: you must be sure to meet him." This natural caution must, however, be skillfully concealed. If allowed to become evident, it is ascribed to a thing called professional jealousy.

It must not be thought that writers do not like to foregather. They do. They even like to talk shop among themselves. Also some of us like others of us very much personally. But this is because we happen to be congenial or agreeable one to the other, not because we use the same burglar's tools, and certainly not because we feel we are brothers together in that great fraternity, the Mystic Knights of the Pen.

Likewise, we have a humorously tolerant understanding of our common predicament. We have a job, and certain things go with the job. Teas, luncheons, receptions, autographs, photographs, "I've read all your books and I—" "You're very kind to say so"—a certain required pose. We understand that: we forgive it in one another, provided the twinkle is in the eye and the tongue is in the cheek. We like the job, and we become

habituated to routine acceptances. And gradually we accumulate true friends who understand.

But occasionally something happens so thoroughly outside routine that our souls are filled with unholy delight. And few would understand that, for on the surface those incidents are of such sort as to fill the conventional-minded bystanders with the horror of embarrassment.

Each summer the Bohemian Club holds its encampment in its magnificent redwood grove on the Russian River. I attended regularly for a number of years. So did a very distinguished jurist; but it just so happened that we never met, though mutual friends thought, and justly, that we would greatly enjoy one another's acquaintance. Finally the moment arrived. We were both guests for the evening at a barbecue. Now the judge was ordinarily, and throughout three hundred and sixty-four days of the year, a most sober, respectable, and dignified gentleman. But on the one day he permitted himself to relax. This was the day. He faced me unsteadily, focused on me a wavering eye.

"M'boy," he acknowledged the introduction, "I am happy to meet you. I've long wanted to meet you. I've read all your books. I came to California before you were born, and I've ridden more trails than you could ever write about, and I've always wanted to meet you so I could ask you jus'-one-question. Jus'-one-question," he repeated owlshly, laying his hand on my shoulder.

"What is it, Judge? Shoot!" said I, bracing myself for the inevitable, and in this case maudlin, compliment, acutely aware of the relishing attention of the wide circle of grinning hyenas surrounding us.

"M'boy," said the judge ponderously, "how *do* you get anybody to publish s'ch damn rot?"

Many years ago Will Irwin, Samuel Hopkins Adams, and I lived together on Washington Square. A certain women's organization of literary aspiration insisted on giving us a reception. We shied off in horror from the first proposal. But for some reason it was considered part of the job. So we finally agreed. And then, at the very last moment, Will laid his ears back and balked; nor, short of calling in the police force, could we move him. Sam and I were near to murder, for only the comfort of a united front had got us into the thing at all. Then Sam had an idea. Will's wild-haired and genial appearance was not so well known then as it is now. We took a chance. We hunted up a long, lank, and saturnine individual of our acquaintance named Horace Canfield, and took him along as Will Irwin. Can had imagination. He needed only a syllabus of the situation. He was easily the center and life of the party. His depiction of the Literary Celebrity was a nice blend of Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, and the less demure moods of John L. Sullivan. Sam and I, as co-celebrities, were completely overshadowed. Contrary to our expectations, we passed a

thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, sitting back in peace and watching Canfield build up for the renegade Irwin a reputation that must have lasted him quite some time.

This was good enough, but to Sam was vouchsafed a greater moment. To him, standing apart, surged an upholstered, gushing lady. She did know his name, which made it all the better.

"Oh, Mr. Adams!" she cried to him, clasping her hands together, "when you see all these *wonderful* people like this, doesn't it make you wish you could write?"

"I try," said Sam meekly.

Scandalized bystanders who had overheard dragged the upholstered one aside and hastily instructed her; and others babbled to Sam in a feverish effort to make him forget. They were horrified. How could they know, poor things, the unholy joy that irradiated Sam's whole being?

Fan mail is a good old subject. Whenever a writer needs shoes for the baby he digs into his files and always can find therein plenty of material for an amusing article. So we'll touch but lightly on that. But I would like to say this: an author likes to get fan mail, whether he will admit it or not. From it he may extract some exasperation and annoyance, but a great deal more of genuine amusement, and plenty of heart-warming pleasure. A lot of it is self-seeking; authors are supposed to be business morons and are on every sucker list. I got a letter the other day

from a total stranger suggesting that I give him fifteen hundred dollars so he could start a mink farm. He came to me because he had gathered from my writings that I am "fond of the outdoors." It is an admirable *non sequitur*, but not so complete as one told me years ago by Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson. Someone addressed her husband as follows:

"DEAR MR. STEVENSON: I have read your books, so please send me a complete collection of Samoan stamps. Yours truly." That was all.

Some are merely ingenious methods of getting an autograph. This is a comparatively harmless pastime, provided a stamped envelope is enclosed. It rarely is; but, personally, I send 'em anyway. It goes with the job. I do not share the alarm of some that many of the autographs so procured are promptly sold at fabulous prices. It has long been my ambition to become so utterly celebrated that my clubs would prefer to keep my signed chits for the autographs, rather than charge me with them; but each first of the month shatters that dream. I do not know what my autograph is quoted at, if at all, but I suspect it stands somewhere on the list with Pink Monster Gold Mining and Milling. So I send them. Photographs, signed or otherwise, are different. An actor's personal appearance is part of his job: a writer's is not, and I am not particularly proud of mine anyway. Likewise I will sign books when—and only when—they have

a reversible wrapping with the sender's name and address on the other side. And stamps. I endorse heartily a letter Robert Barr once showed me, written him by Mark Twain in answer to such a request. "I'll do it for your friend, since it's you who ask," wrote Clemens, "but please don't ask again. I'd rather go to hell than do up packages. And," he added, "I hate crowded excursions too." I share his dislike. I never could wrap things neatly. My efforts look more like a tamale than a package.

While we are considering this phase of the poor author's life, allow me to express my childlike wonder at another phenomenon. There must be a kind of person who likes to talk. Just talk, for the sake of hearing his head roar. Otherwise how account for the optimism of women's clubs, men's fraternal organizations, commercial bodies, high schools, literary societies, and whatnots in assuming that you will be delighted to drop everything, spend time in preparation, make sometimes long journeys, solely for the pleasure of addressing them? On no particular subject, apropos of nothing, for no profit; just talk.

Ordinarily their honorable secretaries do not even ask you; they tell you, with possibly the small concession of an alternative date. Or the editors of little stunt or house or college magazines who write or call up demanding a brief article of three thousand words of Advice to Young Authors—or Fathers, or Mothers, or Readers? Sometimes,

when I have time, or the request is particularly complacent in its assumption that I should leap at the opportunity, I ask these people if their printers or their butchers are making an equivalent contribution, pointing out that a writer is capable of but so many words of output in any given period, which are presumably worth just so much money to him. Once, over the phone, in reply to such a demand, I agreed, with a proviso.

"I'll do it," I told this young man, "on one condition."

"What is that?" he asked.

"I'll do it," said I, "if you will give me just one really sound reason why I should."

Ensued a long silence. I thought he had hung up.

"I can't think of any," he replied at last.

Nevertheless, the great bulk of fan mail is welcome. I answer it all, however briefly, and have little patience with those who rebuff by silence a genuine and friendly impulse.

But I do wish that schoolteachers would get over inflicting my unimportant person on so many of their pupils as a "theme for my thesis in our course in English, and will you please write me a complete account of your life and your opinions on——"

Still, it's worth it.

I suppose, while we are considering the author as a subject for pity, something should be said of the youthful aspirant with the manuscript. Reading manuscripts is the

job of an editor or a literary agent, not of an author. An author with any degree of creative imagination is, to my mind, a very unreliable judge of another's work. Especially of a new writer. He is not able to avoid reading into the thing something of his own. That is how he works: seizing upon latent implications and elaborating and rounding them out until they become proportioned. The smallest obscure item in a newspaper, or a trifling incident on the street, or a chance word overheard, becomes instantly, to his perception, a complete short story with all sorts of side issues and counterplots and characterizations that exist to nobody but himself.

So his tendency is, not to read the submitted manuscript objectively, but to supply—subconsciously, of course—its lacks and deficiencies. He is likely to end all steamed up with the idea that he has made a find, and to make strong recommendations, and to be honestly bewildered when the thing doesn't click. It is not there—except for him, and possibly its author. The author is too impulsively warmhearted and sympathetic and unselfish and noble (I am an author). He lacks that cold-blooded detachment of the editor or literary agent (I am not an editor or literary agent).

Or the exact contrary may be the case. Every writer has evolved his own technique, his point of view toward his work. That strongly biases his personal tastes. Naturally this does not mean that he is unable to enjoy and

appreciate—even enthusiastically—work done in a manner different from his own. But it does mean that, when he is called on for an opinion of a manuscript, he looks at it from the creative point of view, and that in turn means from the point of view of his own methods. He sees what the fellow is driving at, in his unconscious thought; at once his own technical machinery begins to function.

If the tyro happens in some aspects to approximate his critic's own methods, then the latter is quite likely to be too favorably disposed. He sends the thing to his agent, or his editor, with an enthusiastic letter about his new discovery, and these long-suffering gentlemen reply guardedly with thanks; and no more is heard of the matter. Unless the disappointed tyro lights on the author with both hobnailed feet. The net result of the whole experiment is a lowered opinion of the poor author's good will, influence, and intelligence by both the tyro and the editor.

So it probably will be of no real value to you to ask your author friend to read your stuff and tell you whether you are any good or not. It might, of course. There are classic instances of the encouragement of young talent by older genius, etc., etc. Touching picture. Probably good for the soul of the older genius. But as for the young talent, it would have got there anyway. Like every other writer I am constantly asked whether or not a certain individual "shall go on with writing," with

longer or shorter samples of the aspirant's product. I give them the only sensible reply; and yet I am accused of heartless frivolity:

"If you can stop writing, do so at once. If you are unable to stop, you may be intended to be a writer." That covers it, it seems to me.

Who am I to assume responsibility for a man's life, on any basis whatever? Certainly not on that of a single quatrain, or a few pages of prose. Here is one. Cross my heart, it is genuine. I do not know what it means. It came to me a great many years ago. Possibly it is by now perfectly good modern poetry: its author was ahead of his time. It was labeled "Conscience," and that title seems to give it a vague, amorphous meaning, if one glances at it sidewise, so to speak. In that respect it resembles Mrs. White's ideal movie title. Personally, I think it an admirable movie title. But when one analyzes it, it means nothing, nothing at all. The title is: *Love Beyond Sin*.

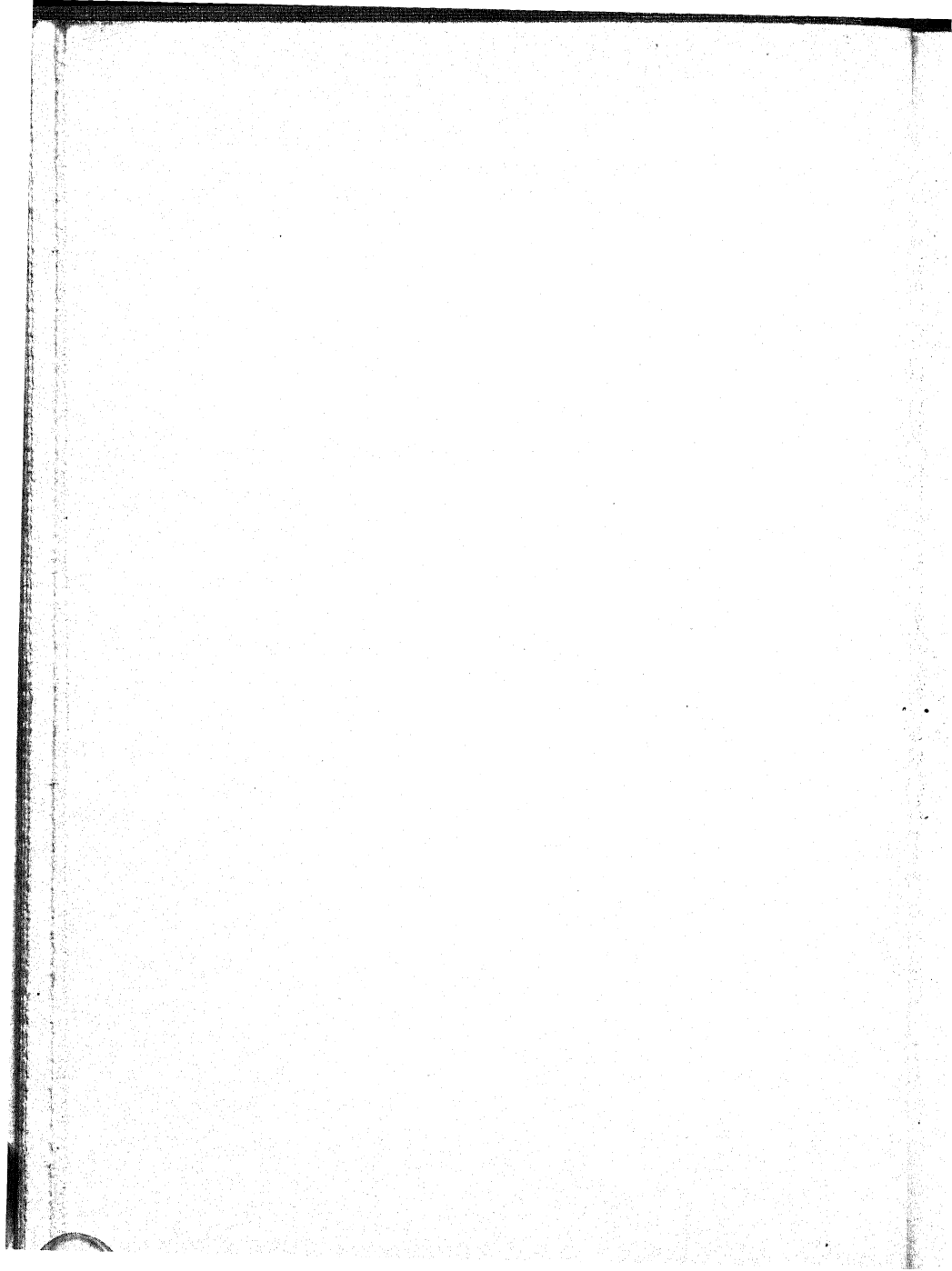
The quatrain labeled "Conscience" runs as follows:

*A speaking voice obtrudes the mind
With words that whisper of the right
To startle forth, or searching, find
The thoughts that cannot bear the light.*

It is like the fourth dimension: you *almost* get it!

But these things are, after all, on the surface. I am not asking you to pity the poor author so profoundly as to

cause yourself real anguish. Writing is a good job. And in making that statement I am not referring to the fact that it is sometimes well paid, or that a man's time is his own to arrange as he pleases, or that he can live where he chooses, or that it makes for fame. Writing is a good profession because it is a friendly profession; it makes friends. And friends are good things to have, even if you never see them; yes, even if you never hear of them. I am just enough of a mystic to believe that the establishment of even unknown bonds of affinity is somehow strengthening to the soul.



California Hospitality

THE TRUTH ABOUT LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION

58510



California Hospitality

IV

IN THE OLD DAYS California was very far away. Getting here was such a big job that the adventurer need never pay a hotel bill provided he had the slightest acquaintance with anybody. And an invitation meant a visit, not merely a week-end call. Three months was the idea of an average visit. Hence the legend of "California Hospitality." Good Californians lived up to it. When I read, in the financial reports of some of these hotels, a brag of "80 per cent occupancy," I indulge in a gentle sneer. If any private-house guest rooms dropped that low, it was because the owner had gone away.

There was never any lack of custom. If the tourist did not know anybody, there was always the letter of introduction. Letters of introduction, curiously enough, increase in number as the square of the distance. A New Yorker would never dream of giving one to Boston unless he had a very good, specific reason for bringing two people together. But if the most casual acquaintance merely mentioned that he was going to California, our New Yorker seized his pen.

"I know a man out there!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "I'll give you a letter to him. Oh, Miss Soosis," he

called to his secretary, "who's that fellow I used to see once in a while down at The Players— Oh yes, White." He would write for a moment and then look up. "Let's see, what's your name?"

This made it very pleasant for us out here in the wide-open spaces where one's nearest neighbor was often a hundred yards away.

It is not denied that we thus met many interesting and agreeable people. Indeed, most of them were interesting and agreeable. But time went on; transportation improved; Southern California became definitely a resort, not only in winter, but in summer as well. Everything was changed except that legend of California Hospitality and the letter-of-introduction habit, which had by now become grooved in the race consciousness, like the swarming instinct in bees. We were still overjoyed to see the interesting and agreeable people; but how pick them out in the crowd? And how find out whether they might be interesting and agreeable at all when there were so many of them?

Incidentally, we had near and dear friends of our own who lived here. But they, too, were centers, nuclei so to speak, of their own letter-of-introduction visitors, who must be entertained. We could exchange brief, bright smiles across seething multitudes, but satisfactorily intimate meetings must be bootlegged in the dark of the moon.

We soon came to realize what was needed, but so far our best inventive brains have failed to supply that need. The first architect who invents, and patents, the Collapsible Guest Room will make his fortune. One, I mean, that can be there when you heartily want to welcome your dearest friends, but which can be folded away out of commission when Joe Doakes appears with a letter to you from Jim Zilch, whom you remember but dimly if at all. It seems impossible, but I hope it is not. After all, human ingenuity has done things—like Boulder Dam—that to my simple mind appear much more wonderful.

Only Californians will understand how important this is. The Outlander does not feel the pressure of the California Hospitality legend. An empty spare room does not impose on him an iron obligation to fill it. Nor elsewhere does a visitor ever expect that he *must* be invited to occupy it, merely because he is in town. And certainly he does not feel hurt or neglected if he is not. Neither, for that matter, does he feel hurt or neglected in California. No; he feels insulted and acts accordingly.

The southerners in our state have long known these facts, for winter tourists naturally gravitate more to the south. We used to live south, and we liked it there. But in one short period we were called upon to honor one-hundred twenty-eight letters of introduction. Their bearers were all nice people. They had been called upon to honor letters of introduction themselves—possibly one

a year!—and they knew the Emilypost of the situation. The irreducible minimum of ordinary courtesy must be a dinner and a drive-around to show off all the sights. And it would be very snippy to let it go at that. You had to do something more, if only to show you liked them. Since we possessed neither a banquet hall nor a sight-seeing bus, nor thirty-six idle hours a day, we moved north.

But hold on, let me give you one small specific example. At that time Joe Fithian and I owned all of Sandyland—which I named Sandyland myself, all rumor to the contrary notwithstanding. We had there a little beach house. We used to surfboard. Our friends used to join us. Also their friends. Also our letter-of-introductions. Also the letter-of-introductions of our friends. Also the friends of the various letter-of-introductions. We served tea. That is to say, we furnished a five-gallon coffeepot of it and a bushel or so of doughnuts bought in the village. The mob helped itself. We, and a few intimates, generally sneaked out to the kitchen back porch to snatch a few moments together. One afternoon a most personable young man approached Mrs. White.

“Charming little clubhouse, isn’t it?” said he in his best social manner. “Were you ever here before?”

Our famed California Hospitality had become a trifle impersonal. That is when we moved north.

Here we found people living in almost shocking in-

nocence. They occupied commodious houses with plenty of spare rooms. They had occasional guests, to be sure, but plenty of people known to them came, not only from the East, but from all over the world, and stayed at hotels! And nobody thought anything of it! They led—still lead—the bemused, idyllic existence of the South Seas before the whalers landed. It was impossible to arouse in such people any interest in the Collapsible Guest Room.

But the whalers are on the way. Next year is Exposition year. And these people are going to be caught unprepared. They have developed no immunity. Unless they can be aroused, and aroused *now*, it is going to be too late. Defenses cannot be improvised at the last minute.¹

What can be done? Very little. But here are some suggestions that have been brought to me.

Rent your house and go away. Or just go away. Effective. Objections: maybe you'd like to see the Fair yourself; maybe you do not feel like separating yourself from your books, tools, garden, hobbies, reference files, or whatnots; maybe you just hate to abandon the field without striking a blow.

Sit tight. Then you won't need to buy that best seller that tells you how to lose friends and alienate people.

¹This was written in 1938. The Exposition has come and gone. Northern Californians will never be the same again.

There is also the danger of mob violence by fanatical boosters of the California Hospitality legend.

Adopt a baby. But you'll have to keep the baby afterward.

Get smallpox, and announce after recovery the room is being fumigated. Some people prefer this.

Invite now, for the duration, somebody who fits in like family. Best, if you can get 'em. They are scarce, and those who qualify probably can't come. And if they can come, it probably cannot be for the duration.

Something might be learned from Florida, if a commission could be sent there. They know something about it. Some friends of mine were examining a house with a view of rental.

"Now this room," said the agent, "is arranged so it can be convincingly made into a den or a small library, if you want to thoroughly guest-proof the house."

Guest-proofing houses, I am given to understand, has in Florida become a highly developed industry, like our Pest Control. But to us it is too drastic. Some guests we *want*.

Inventors! The opportunity of a lifetime! Use the bean! A fortune awaits you! The Collapsible Guest Room!

Get busy! Nineteen thirty-nine is upon us!

Hail, Hail, the Tourist!



Hail, Hail, the Tourist!

I AM NOT A NATIVE SON of the Golden West. In spite of that disability, I cannot bring myself to look with the worshipful eye of the Outlander on those who are, for I came to California before most of the present Native Sons had arrived. In 1884, to be exact.

I mention this purely personal bit of biography simply as an assurance and guarantee that I have been properly brought up. I know what things to mention and what things not to mention. I can rhapsodize over liquid dollars as well as the next fellow; by which I would mean that rotten-cold rain that spoiled the picnic. I can turn any earthquake into a mere playful firelet. My command of the word "unusual" is—well, unusual.

To be sure, I do not particularly like slogans; or pink, purple, or green plaster; or such things as labeling the municipal swill wagons Disposal Service. Neither am I wholly convinced that the more people you can get together on or near any given spot, the better for the spot. But there is no sense in confessing my minor weaknesses. We all have them. The point I would make is that in all the greater things of life, the things that matter, I am sound.

So it must be distinctly understood that I am *not* writing about Tourists. Whatever else I may be, I am never blasphemous. In one year 1,790,558 tourists visited California. They spent on an average of \$7.50 a day apiece. The total crop values of that state run about \$300,000,000 a year; the total mineral production only a little more.

That's what our High Priests say. The figures duly impress me. Especially that \$7.50 a day. I wonder how they manage it. I cannot. It would seem, to my simple observation, that the Picture Post Card and Hot Dog bill would come to nearly that. But, anyway, far be it from me to utter one syllable that might be even remotely construed as an affront to these, our Greater Gods.

But *tourii* are different. They may be readily identified. They go about in flocks, their eyes lack luster, and their invariable response to such items of spectacle or information as are called to their attention is "uh-huh." They eat things with skins, such as oranges or bananas; they drift inertly, but with a strange, tenacious persistence, into private premises. Presumably they also have \$7.50 a day, for there exist, and have always existed, people and organizations to herd them about. In many respects they do resemble tourists. Indeed I had always looked upon them as such until the above figures were called to my attention.

For many years I made my residence in Santa Barbara.

It is in most respects a desirable place to live. That was the principal reason why I was forced, reluctantly, to move away. I would not be believed were I to tell you how many letters of introduction have been presented to me in a single week. I like letters of introduction. Through them I have been privileged to know some of the most interesting of my friends. But for a time it seemed to me that my most casual acquaintances in the East were keeping stenographers overtime writing the things.

What could be done? The bearer of a letter of introduction is, per se, legitimately entitled to the following as a minimum: (a) one call; (b) one meal; (c) one drive in exhibition of "points of interest." And if that minimum was not followed up by some further little attention, the visitor is likely to conclude that he has not made good, or that you are both rude and indifferent, or that the fellow who gave him the letter owes you money.¹

You can't spend all your carefree, idle hours conducting a fleet of sightseeing motorcars or presiding at banquets. After a time the far-famed California hospitality, in my case, at least, did wear pretty thin. It had to become a rigid ritual, instead of a rite of natural human intercourse.

In the well-known "good old days" California hospitality was very real and very enjoyable. As I men-

¹Yes, I've said it before—I say it again.

tioned, friends came to visit, not for a week end, but for a month or two. They brought their work with them—if they had any—and settled down to the life of the country, and finally departed, reluctantly, as “non-resident Californians” in good standing.

One such guest, for several such visits, was Samuel Hopkins Adams. He, like myself, was a keen and philosophic observer of the varied phenomena of this our amusing world. We used to sit together on the broad veranda soaking up the sunshine and waiting for the appearance of tourists, for even in the “good old days” the tourists were with us.

It happened that my house was located on the direct route to the Mission, which was obligatory to tourists. They sat humped up resignedly in carriages or busses and said “uh-huh” when the driver, as a matter of routine, told them that this was the home of the Celebrated Author. The driver had to point out something to them every so often, even if it was only a ground squirrel; otherwise they would not be getting their \$7.50 a day’s worth. This he could do mechanically, in his sleep. Once in a while, however, one injected a bit of originality into his spiel.

“This,” we heard one of them say, “is the home of Stewart Edward White, the author. If you’ll look close you kin see his wife drying her hair.”

This batch of tourists did not seem thrilled.

"Uh-huh," said they, but then they would have said the same thing to Yosemite.

The majority of them had never heard of the Celebrated Author. But in quite sufficient numbers they had; or thought they ought to have. The driver would stop his horses. The tourii would descend, open the garden gate, drift uncertainly up the paths toward the house. Some would pluck flowers, probably to press between the leaves of the *World's Compendium of Useful Knowledge*. Sooner or later, if undeterred, they would likely ring the bell and demand an interview. We evolved a plan.

Sam is a large, husky person, about twice my size. Though the most genial and good-natured individual in the world, he is endowed with a fierce and determined aspect. When the tourii, in their uncertain manner, had drifted so close we could see the whites of their eyes, I would seize Sam by the collar of his coat and the slack of his pants, propel him rapidly down the steps, and hurl him violently off into space.

"Just because you've read some of my books, you needn't think you can come here and make *my* acquaintance!" I would shout after him, and Sam would slink off, looking back malevolently over his shoulder and muttering "curses! curses!"; and the tourii would scuttle off like quail, and Sam would come back, and we'd set ourselves for a new batch.

George Booth, returning to his house atop Booth's Point, where tourii would scarcely be expected to climb unguided, nevertheless discovered scattered about his broad veranda a group of these strange creatures. They stared at him impassively. He raised his hat.

"Madam," said he to the nearest, "I beg to be excused. I am going in to count my spoons."

The tourii continued to stare at him and to chew their cuds. They did not even say "uh-huh."

Nevertheless, tourii are articulate at times. I suspect they are not even subhuman, evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. My own theory is that they are quite human: that among them are actually some nice people caught by the spell. In other words, *tourus* is a state of being. Some people are less resistant than others to its influence, just as some people are susceptible to strawberry rash. Others are immune. The former are the tourii; the latter are the visitors or the tourists.

I have traveled much about most parts of the world, so I feel qualified to utter a warning; and it is this: it is fatally easy to become a tourus. One is likely to slip into it gradually, without thinking. "One little dose won't hurt," sez you. "I'm tired today. I can take it or leave it alone." Which is all very well; but next time you will need a larger dose, and a larger, and a larger, until someday you will find yourself sitting drugged, miles back of your eyes, and faintly you will hear yourself saying "uh-

huh" to somebody. Heaven vouchsafe that you be not then so far gone but that the shock will awaken you to your danger!

It is pitiful; it is criminal. These worthy, well-meaning people permitted, unprepared, unwarned, to set out from the safe protection of their accustomed surroundings into the great world. Talk about the innocent country girl in the great city! The experience may do permanent damage; so that never will they return to normal, but will for the rest of their wrecked lives be doomed to wander under the curse, collecting itineraries, following guides, staring at mere things. There ought to be a book to be placed in the hands of every untraveled—*What a Young Tourist Ought to Know*; and possibly a second book of rescue, written by some addict who has broken his chains, on *The Use and Abuse of Education in Travel*.

There are some who practice complete abstention. They consider it immoral to engage guides; they never join conducted excursions; they recoil by instinct from anyone who exhibits any tendency to "show them things." This is a healthy instinct, but I think those who indulge it to the full are extremists. Complete avoidance is a confession of weakness. A man really ought to be able to take it or leave it alone. The main thing is to know whether you are using it, or it is using you.

Maybe I'll write such a book, but I cannot do it here. The subject is too big. I would have to begin so far back.

There are so many modifying corollaries. It would have to be one of those books with case histories scattered through it in fine type. Each case would probably require individual treatment. How about the lady who, with difficulty, was persuaded that the object before her was in fact the Eiffel Tower?

"But," she objected, still doubtful, "it doesn't lean!"

And after I had dealt fully in Part I with the effects on Tourii, I would have to write Part II, which must discuss the *Effects of Tourii on the Places They Visit*. That would be a heartrending task. I would not like to write Part II. I never go to these new Horror Films if I can help it. I hate all scenes of carnage and cruelty and destruction and desecration. I do not refer to the obvious orange peels and peanut shells and old newspapers and names carved in trees and suchlike. They are mere externals. My meaning runs to the deeper deteriorations of self-consciousness.

Have you ever, for instance, been in Port Said between steamers? Wickedest and most glamorous city in the world; vices of the Occident and the Orient; you know the stuff. Well, between steamers Port Said is the quietest, drabdest, sleepest, dullest, most humdrum village this side of Gopher Prairie. Only when the tourii pour down the gangplanks do the bright lights flare, and the bazaars blaze, and the tom-toms tump, and the oily, insinuating gentlemen sidle alongside with propositions and post

cards, and the galla-galla boys appear, and the mysterious, alluring Ouled Nails hand over the sewing to Mother and get busy. Ask any real Parisian about Paris. Get any of the natives anywhere in a confidential mood. As one wearily disillusioned rather unjustly defined it:

"Fiesta? Oh yes. Combination word—fiasco and siesta."

I once sat talking to a native of one of these between-the-steamer places. The northwest coast, both in British Columbia and Alaska, is full of them. On the arrival of the tourists or tourii, as the case may be, they quit their everyday business and become picturesque. The Indian women squat along the roadsides behind a spread of moccasins and buckskin bags; the curio stores hide their real Chilkat blankets and set forth the genuine Souvenirs of Alaska made in St. Paul;² the village hero dons mukluks and stagged shirt and wide hat and leans nonchalantly against the barbershop; the totem poles reassume the sardonic grimness of goggle-eyed scorn proper to totem poles. As we chatted, to us came running that man's son to announce the approach of the tourii.

"Father, Father!" he panted. "Look, here come the sights!"

And so I became possessed of another point of view.

The best antidote against tourism is to become as integral as possible a part of the life of the place one

²The reason for this is that your Alaskan curio dealer is almost always a genuine collector who would rather not sell a good thing unless he can do so to one who can appreciate it.

visits. In other words, to view it from the inside and not from the outside. If one stays long enough, he may actually accomplish this to a considerable extent. But even for a brief bout of sightseeing one can use one's imagination. One can visit any number of cathedrals with impunity if one tries to look at them from the point of view of the people of the country or of the people who built them.

Touring without becoming a tourus is a real art.

Some people have an innate genius for it. You will notice in them two things: that when they talk about their trip abroad they are interesting; and that what they tell has always an element of human interest. They appear to have a knack of coming upon relatable anecdote.

When last I was in Africa, Mrs. White occupied the time cruising about Europe pursuing her own private and personal interests regardless of Baedeker. Among other places she visited the Scottish Highlands. Her distillation of this adventure, apparently, is a delighted and admiring appreciation of the homogeneity of the Scottish characteristics. Not only the people, but the horses and the cattle and the dogs, share the same solid stability and directness. In reward for her sympathetic understanding, corroborating instances were lavishly offered for her appreciation.

In a tram she sat immediately in front of two fine old boys, who greeted one another and sat down together.

"And hoo are ye the day, Tammas?" asked the one, who was a bright and spry old gentleman.

"Na so guid," returned Tammas; "na so guid. I'm gettin' verra auld."

"Weel," the other pointed out with admirable optimism, "there's many a mon no gets a chance at that!"

And again, this time on one of the small steamers crossing the Firth of Forth, she overheard two comfortable matrons exchanging their news.

"And your daughter Janet, she's married, is she not? And how is she getting on?"

"Oh, fine! Fine!" assured the other heartily. Then after a moment: "She canna' abide her mon, but there's allus summat," she added tolerantly.

For a time Mrs. White visited in a house situated on a height overlooking a cottage. The owner of the cottage was observed to select carefully from his fagot pile a stout switch with which he disappeared within doors. A moment later Mrs. White and her hostess heard sounds of a woman's screams.

They rushed down the village street to the police station, which was in sole charge of an elderly person with a fringe of Galloway whiskers beneath his jaws. He listened to their story without emotion. Their urgency and excitement beat vainly against his granite calm. Deliberately he took the matter under advisement.

"I'll na go," he said at last. "She'll be needin' it."

The real purpose of this expedition was, however, not wholly for to see and for to admire. The basis of Mrs. White's great charm is, I think, that she is a mongrel. It has been my experience, both with dogs and humans, that judicious mongrelism makes for the exceptional individual. Mrs. White is half Spanish, half Scotch: she was born on the Isthmus of Panama, was raised in Newport, and married a Westerner; her mother was a Roman Catholic, her father a Presbyterian, and she was brought up an Episcopalian. Now she was engaged in visiting her family on the Scottish side, and making acquaintance of ancestors, contemporary and otherwise.

She succeeded admirably, and was warmheartedly welcomed and made much of; and on departure was presented with a number of family portraits, which gracious gift naturally touched and pleased her greatly. But, when we were rejoined and were well on our way homeward across the Atlantic, we began to worry. This African show had left us flat broke. What would happen to us when the Customs pounced on these works of art? Especially Great-great-great Uncle Peter. Could we afford Great-great-great Uncle Peter, or would we have to leave him in hock? We got more and more nervous; and our nervousness was not lessened when the Inspector unrolled the really imposing canvas, gazed at it respectfully—too respectfully—and said:

"I don't know anything about these things. I'll call the Expert."

He was gone a long time. We occupied the interval re-estimating our liquid assets. The Expert's appearance, when he returned, was appalling. He had gold-rimmed eyeglasses and looked very, very highbrow. We unrolled Uncle Peter again. He glanced at it.

"I suppose," said he, "these things have a sentimental value. Five dollars."

I do not know to this day whether Mrs. White was more relieved or resentful.

One of the contemporary ancestors was a most satisfying find. He was a fine old gentleman of incredible height, with white whiskers and kilties and sporran and all the other props, and he gazed down from his great altitude upon my small wife with a cosmic benevolence.

"Weel, weel, my dear, so ye hae Scottish bluid in ye!" he exclaimed, when apprised of the relationship. "That gies ye a Scottish conscience. *It won't keep ye from sinnin', it'll just keep ye from enjoyin' of it!*"

Which is the best line I've ever heard of in real life; and I've saved it for years hoping to find the exact place to use it, but now set it down here before some of my conscienceless friends repeat it as their own.

These and other things like them my admirable wife brought back. Undoubtedly she saw, and enjoyed, and appreciated Edinburgh Castle and the various "spots

where"—but she does not emphasize them when she talks of her tour in Scotland. In the theatrical world it is a compliment to describe one as a "good trouper." Well, she is what I would call a "good tourist," and is in no danger of becoming one of the tourii.

But let nothing I have said discourage you or render you so fearful of your resistance as to stay home with that \$7.50 a day.

My Ming Collection



My Ming Collection

VI

DIFFERENT PEOPLE have different things they react to without rhyme or reason. Just touch the button and they do the rest. Why does a miscellaneous movie audience in Minnesota, composed of a *mélange* of ex-Yankees and squareheads, yell itself red in the face when the band strikes up "Dixie"? Certainly they have no dear old plantation memories. Nor is the phenomenon confined to Minnesota. It is a sort of generalized convention which even love of the spirited tune cannot quite explain. There are other, more localized fetishes, that are guaranteed sure-fire in reducing loyal citizens of a particular section or state or city to a mush of sentimentality.

Some of these have a solid foundation. Such as a Californian's love for the old-fashioned Chinaman. By Californian I do not mean your latter-day upstarts who know the Golden State only in the twentieth century. You must go back at least into the Gay Nineties to get the full flavor of the relationship. Not that it has even yet entirely disappeared. Here and there the cockles of your heart may still be warmed by the sight of a survivor of the race, very, very wrinkled, but starched and bland and deliberate and uncompromisingly himself.

For in the Eighties, and for perhaps twenty years thereafter, all Chinamen were like that. You adopted them into your household, or they adopted you—that point has never been cleared—and you were fixed for life. Also that particular department of your life was placidly but firmly removed from your control. Nor, short of abandoning Chinese servants completely, were you ever able to change. If for any reason Gin Gwee had to leave, or desired to leave, he did so without fuss or warning. Nobody even bothered. His “second uncle” slid into his place. And if Gin Gwee, his foreign business terminated, decided to return, there he was! And possibly you never saw the second uncle again. Once completely established in the good graces of one or another of the great families, you need never give the thought of service a moment’s worry.

Almost anybody who was started out right, and who was not flagrantly obtuse, or harsh, or unreasonable in other ways, could command this sort of generalized service. If his became known as a good household, he was never unsupplied with a good Chinaman; and that without search or solicitation on his own part. If, on the other hand, he or his womenfolk conducted a bad household, then he was doomed to stupid, slovenly, and incompetent successions, until he gave up Chinese servants in disgust—which settled that situation. This was the plain business aspect, the ordinary run-of-the-mill rela-

tionship, easy, efficient, comfortable, pleasant. The element of personal loyalty and affection—on both sides—was its beautiful and by-no-means-uncommon flowering. We shall return to that later.

Many times I have heard one woman say to another that "Chinese servants are the best in the world, if you know how to run them." Know how to run them! Shucks! If you know how to be run by them would be a more accurate statement. They were perfectly willing to do those things you wanted done—even when, evidently, they did not understand why you should desire them—but they did them in their own way. It was just as well for you to make up your mind first as last that that way was your way, for you would most certainly never get anything different. Anyone who had any success at all with Chinese servants understood that. As a consequence, nobody bothered to apologize for the most startling departures from the ordinary conventions of polite society elsewhere. They were small price to pay for the smooth efficiency of comfort. We took them—and it—for granted.

In our early married life we, personally, conducted our whole establishment on a one-Chinaman basis. We had a moderately good-sized house, with two guest rooms that were occupied most of the time by friends who followed the custom of early days by staying with us for months at a time. Toy took care of the whole show. He cooked

all meals, served them, and washed the dishes. He cleaned the entire house and made the beds. He could, and did, cook and serve, without a moment's hitch of delay or pause, for dinner parties of ten or twelve. He shopped for our vegetables, and we used to think he counted the green peas, so accurately did he seem able to gauge our exact appetites. Furthermore, by half-past two, or three o'clock at the latest, he was all finished until time to start dinner; the whole place, including his kitchen, spick and span, in apple-pie order. At that hour, dressed in beautiful brocades, snow-white socks, thick-soled Chinese shoes, stiff black skullcap topped with a carved button of coral, his long pigtail down his back, he toddled off down the street to Chinatown on pleasure of his own. He was always calm; he was never hurried. I used to study how he could do it and never did quite make out, except that he never made a false or unnecessary move, and that he was marvelously clever at dovetailing one kind of task with another. We paid him forty dollars a month.

On one occasion we were called upon to entertain at dinner a very important diplomat and his lady. Things went smoothly, as usual. The courses succeeded one another without delay, piping hot. Toy waited faultlessly, slipping in and out so unobtrusively that no one noticed he was ever absent from the room. He paused behind Mrs. White's chair.

"Missy White," he instructed her, "tonight you put on clean nightgown," and proceeded with the business of the dinner.

The Californians present probably did not even notice this astonishing performance, but those diplomats must have been greatly shocked—or amused. Toy had merely, between change of plates, slipped upstairs to turn down the beds. Next day was laundry day. He had laid out a fresh nightdress. He was informing Mrs. White of that fact. He could imagine no reason why he should not do so; nor would he have understood any reproof.

Only once did Mrs. White depart from the entirely common-sense acceptance. She attended a tea of elderly women, all good housekeepers. She listened to a lot of talk. She returned home filled with a new consciousness that she was neglecting her duties by not taking a more personal supervision of how the details of the household were being carried forward. So she summoned Toy and went over the whole place in approved household fashion according to the lights that had been revealed to her at the tea of the elderly ladies. Toy followed, saying nothing. At length he stopped short in his tracks.

"Whassa matter with you, Missy White?" he demanded. "You talk jus' like one old woman!"

She came to. That was exactly what she was doing.

It is natural that, with such picture-puzzle nicety in fitting the day's doings, Toy and his like should develop

a keen sense of procedure. They proceed largely by routine; and it is disconcerting when, without warning, that routine is broken. And one who had experienced something like that nightgown episode would be astonished to discover how rigid is their sense of propriety and etiquette.

Two blocks below us, on a corner, stood a bungalow. The kitchen entrance was not in the rear, but in the side of the house on one street; the front door was on the other street.

As the whole place was brightly gardened, a stranger had no evident indication as to which was which. One made the mistake: knocked on the kitchen door. It was opened by Sing.

"Is Mrs. Gilchrist at home?" inquired the visitor.

Sing did not reply. He looked her coldly in the eye.

"You go 'round flont door," he instructed, and closed this one in her face.

Dutifully she plodded around to the other side of the house, rang the bell, repeated to Sing, when he came, the same question.

"No," said Sing blandly; "she gone out."

"Wouldn't you think," lamented the visitor, telling about this, "that he could have told me that in the first place?"

Knowing Chinese servants, we did not.

By the late Nineties, if you could get a good Chinese

servant at all, he was trained—at least in his own fashion—and knowledgeable in our ways. But back in the middle Eighties the case was a little different. Fresh recruits were still coming from China. They were learning our habits and our language. Incidentally, they were learning fast; especially when it is considered how diametrically opposite to ours are so many of their customs. We forget that many of our methods must seem upside down to them. After a time they took it for granted that we did most of our concerns illogically, and ceased to try to reason about them. They just did as they were told, and did not bother to find any logic in it. That is the explanation for most of the “stupid Chinese performances” the newcomer used to talk about.

So well-known was this trait that everybody warned the newcomer of it. Owing to difficulties of language, instruction in duties was always by demonstration.

“They’ll do exactly as you show them,” was the advice, “but be sure you show them the first time correctly, for you can never change them.”

I have seen Gin Gwee placidly watering the lawn from under an umbrella, in a pouring rain. From the practical point of view, it was an imbecile performance, and Gin Gwee knew that just as well as you or I. But in other matters, that seemed to him equally imbecile, he had used his common sense to modify orders—and caught the devil for it! So he had made to himself a resolve that

forever after he would follow the letter, for no man can fathom the fantastic ideas of the foreign devil. And when a Chinaman makes a resolve, believe you me it is copper-riveted, and the incident may be considered closed.

My parents rented a small house and acquired Gin Gwee. They showed him his duties in the minutest detail once. That was sufficient. Pending completion of a bin in the corner of the lot, they dumped the wood ashes from the kitchen stove on the ground just outside the kitchen door. The bin was finished of a Friday. Father demonstrated the removal of the ashes from the ground outside the door to the new bin. Thereafter, for as long as we occupied this house, Gin Gwee dumped the ashes beside the door until a Friday, when he transferred them to the bin; nor could he be deflected from that routine. With the first demonstration of duties, whatever the lacks and discrepancies, the incident was finished for all time.

Sometimes mistakes in understanding were amusing. Early in their association Mrs. Gilchrist decided to instruct Sing in the etiquette of formal calls. Therefore, as usual, she demonstrated. She rang her own doorbell, handed Sing her card, showed him what to do with it, and all the rest.

"You *sabe*?" she concluded as usual.

"I *sabe*," said Sing confidently.

A day or so later Mrs. Gilchrist's next-door neighbor ran across on some errand, after the informal fashion of next-door neighbors.

"Good morning, Sing," said she brightly when he opened the door, and made to enter without further inquiry, for she was an intimate of the house. But Sing blocked the doorway.

"You got ticket?" he demanded. "You no got ticket, you no come in."

When one of these old-fashioned Chinamen found a household that suited him, he not only stayed, but he became one of the family. Its interests were his own. He gave its members not only a perfect service, but a loyalty that expressed itself in the oddest vigilances and indignations. Nobody put anything over on his people—not so far as he was concerned! He considered it his privilege to examine every purchase that came into the house, of any description, no matter how trivial, or how intimate, or how far remote from his own responsibility.

"How much you pay for dat?" he would demand accusingly, and, on receiving an answer, would shake his head in gloomy disapproval.

"Wong will be the death of my soul!" complained one woman, half laughing. "I'm torn whether to lie to him, or become a niggard in the eyes of my friends, or abandon everything and let him look on me as a hope-

less fool! If I give a dinner, I'm in terror always lest there be not enough to go around, but there always is—just," she acknowledged.

Toy never hesitated to advise or correct our guests. Among others, we once entertained a vivacious English-woman of high degree. To her Toy offered a trayful of various hors d'oeuvres. She was telling a story and hovered in hesitation of choice.

"Come on; you hully up," Toy interrupted her finally.

Startled, she stared at him wildly and grabbed in haste the nearest. Toy, undisturbed, went on his rounds.

It was impossible to observe small etiquettes. It must not be thought that Toy ever intruded outside his own sphere of responsibility. Indeed, I doubt if he bothered to listen to what anybody was saying. But within that sphere he considered he had rights.

"You take some," he insisted to one who declined a certain dish. "Him velly good."

Or he would firmly modify one's choice.

"No, you take that one," he ordered, and was meekly obeyed.

He moved with a calm dignity that raised anything he said and did miles above gaucherie. In his white starched loose garments and his silent felt-soled shoes, with his carved ivory face and his shaved forehead and his queue down his back, he was a beautiful and soothing presence. This dignity was an integral part of his aura.

He did not need to maintain it, but once in a while he showed that he knew how to impose it. At such a time he proved himself master of the apt phrase to a degree not indicated by his usual conversational English.

While Toy was still with us, the horse age came to an end and the motor age began. We got ourselves a two-cylinder, eight-horsepower contraption. We also owned a tiny shack on a gorgeous beach twelve miles away. When we visited this shack for a week end, or perhaps a longer visit, we took Toy. These excursions were for him an event, and for them he assumed his proudest raiment. Dressed in brocade, sitting stiffly upright on the back seat, Toy made quite an impressive figure. One day, when we had stopped downtown for some purpose, a tourist drifted alongside. He wanted to ingratiate himself, so he addressed Toy in what he had gathered from the funny papers was appropriate language.

"Hullo, John!" he cried heartily. "You likee ridee automobile? Huh? Heap much jiggle-jiggle up and down?"

Toy did not even glance toward the worm.

"Only occasionally, sir," he replied.

Toy was several steps above the coolie class, probably from the north of China, to judge by his height and the clean-cut, aristocratic lines of his face. He was, I think, devoted to us; I know we were devoted to him. When, after many years, there came that mysterious and com-

elling call that sooner or later takes every Chinaman back to China, we looked after his disappearing back, with the pigtail wiggling, and our eyes were misty. Generally these old Chinamen returned after a time to their families. One of our friends has several of these superannuated ex-servants living in tiny one-room shacks scattered about her extensive place, content to sit in the sun and be near their "missy." If you wish to gauge the sometimes tigerlike loyalty of these people, delve into the true stories of the San Francisco earthquake.

But Toy did not come back; nor did we expect him to do so. Nobody ever gets more than a glimpse of the early lives and circumstances of these men. I do not know whether this is a natural secretiveness, or a taking for granted, or a despair of conveying the picture, but so it is.

However, we did know that Toy had ties in China that must ultimately claim him. It seemed he owned, or had an interest in, a furniture factory that apparently brought him in more money than we were paying him. Also a family. This latter bit of news came to us only toward the last. Toy showed us, proudly, a photograph he had just received—a comely woman with four sons. We gazed on it with slight perplexity, for two of the children were of very tender years.

"These all your family?" I asked.

"My family. All boy," said Toy.

"But, Toy," I expostulated, "how can that be? To my certain knowledge you have not been back to China for ten years."

"Oh, dat all light," said Toy complacently. "I got fliend."

We left it at that.

Chinese New Year's is even yet an event, but in the old days it was a ceremonial of courtesy and good will with both races. To a small boy who saved his pennies for months toward the Fourth-of-July purchase of four "giants" and a half-dozen packs of firecrackers, to be dissected and squibbed off one by one, the pyrotechnic externals were truly awesome. From the roof of each laundry or shop or joss house extended a horizontal staff from whose tip depended a heavy rope of firecrackers that reached to the very ground. Up these ran the crackling fire of explosions. They writhed and smoked and spat in a grand and soul-satisfying racket, and in the middle of the street bamboo-covered bombs whanged away like heavy artillery, and on the upper gallery of the veranda of the joss house men beat great gongs. Such oriental lavishness was beyond our wildest dreams. We could simply stand open-mouthed, seeing and hearing, but unable to believe.

To this day I cannot guess why there were no accidents, or discern any reason why the picturesquely ramshackle buildings did not catch fire. But, though the

tolerant authorities of that day took no extra precautions, they never did.

Each of these laundries, shops, and joss houses had been set in order for visitors. The air was blue with the sweet, heavy smoke of joss sticks. The walls were hung with picture strips. Bowls of Chinese lilies, carefully brought to blooming for just this date, stood in the windows and on carved ebony taborets. A long, narrow table was spread with dozens and dozens of small porcelain dishes, each containing a different exotic sweetmeat. Most were very strange looking. We small boys cherished a delightfully shuddering delusion that some of them were candied rats. A caller was welcome to sample them if he chose. It was discourteous not to eat at least one of them. The appreciations of the Mongolian palate are not those of the Caucasian, but there were, fortunately, certain good, old, easily recognizable stand-bys, such as litchi nuts and ginger. Your hosts received you smilingly, bowing from the hips, their hands tucked in their sleeves. For this once they were all magnificent. Even the lowliest laundry boys were dressed in dark blue and lavender brocades, their loose trousers taped tight about their ankles, their queues hanging. There was little conversation, but much good will expressed in beaming smiles. You drifted in, took your sweetmeat, said Happy New Year, Melican fashion, received a strip of red paper on which were decorative ideographs boldly brushed,

and drifted out. You made the whole rounds, whether you knew the people or not. "Chinese calling cards," we designated the strips of red paper, though we never knew whether they were actually name cards or some kind of motto or charm. It seemed impossible to get accurate information on such points.

Often we asked Toy the translation of some inscription in restaurant or temple. He had one reply, delivered as one word.

"What does that say, Toy?" we would inquire.

"Good luck, long life, 'n' happiness," said Toy.

On Chinese New Year's each member of his family received from its Chinese servant rich gifts. Embarrassingly so, touchingly so, from a forty-dollar-a-month man, it often seemed to us: an exquisite and elaborate piece of embroidery, carved ivory, a bolt of heavy silk, sandalwood fans, and always long red-paper packages of incense sticks—"smell-um-goods," as Toy called them.

Chinatown, even in the smaller towns, was always picturesque, always of interest to the newcomer. I don't know how it was managed, but a Chinaman could, with a varnished duck, a few yards of dizzy muslin, and some red paper, throw glamour about the most commonplace old frame building. But the Chinatown of San Francisco was famed. An incredible number of these people were crowded into a space four blocks square. In sight, sound, and smell it was a miniature replica of a Chinese city. It

was one of the sights for "tourii." By daytime they wandered through it in droves. By night small, select, and shuddery parties got themselves a "detective" by way of protection, and were led into awesome places, culminating in gambling hells and opium dens and cellars that went down three or four stories underground—we counted the flights of stairs! They departed, firmly convinced that they knew all about China and the Chinese. They had seen nothing—they could see nothing without credentials—of the beautiful upper-story homes and charming family life of the great merchants, or even the sober social clubs, where, beneath portraits of the President and the Emperor, men sat quietly at ebony-wood tables shuffling the mah-jongg tiles.

Incidentally, these alleged underground works were amusing. The illusion was perfect—for it was an illusion. You entered from the street; you went down a flight of steps into a cellar full of smoke and gamblers; you went down another flight of steps into a subcellar full of smoke and opium fiends; you went down another flight of steps into a sub-subcellar full of smoke and sinister hatchet men; and so on, if your "detective" was a good thrill picker and had the proper connections; until, with a shudder of ecstasy, you realized you were four, five stories deep in the bowels of the earth—with, probably, secret passages extending in all directions! You climbed back up all those stairs and wrote postal cards on which

you used the phrase, "a veritable rabbit warren." Two facts escaped your notice—that, invariably, you made these subterranean visits at night, and that even in the lowest story the air was passably breathable.

The explanation is simple. San Francisco's Chinatown is built on a steep side hill. The story which is the third or fourth when viewed from the downhill side of a building becomes the ground floor when entered from the street above. After dark this fact is not apparent. All the "detective" has to do is to take his "tourii" in at the upper street level. From that nethermost "four stories underground" he could have let them out directly on the level of the alleyway below, but that would never have done. It was a neat trick, loyally sustained by true Californians. The fire and earthquake of 1906 were supposed to have filled all these underground works, and the modern guides to the modern Chinatown have not dared revive the hoax.

Modern Chinatown is well worth a visit, but it is in no sense the old. It is more consciously picturesque. Many of its new buildings, erected after the fire, are deliberately of Chinese architecture, with curving roofs and red and gold decorations. There is better display of goods, better English spoken. Things are more in order. My collection contains little of it. It is much more sanitary and businesslike and all the rest, I admit. So I presume are the modern alert and snappy young Chinamen

I see on the streets. But I know little of them. At the Bohemian Club, shrewd, wrinkled, lively little old Fong stands¹ behind his own especial little counter. Heaven alone knows the tally of his years. Only the very oldest members know the period of his service. Now its daily duration is but two hours—from four o'clock to six. He serves tea to those who want it and cackles hilariously to those members he considers his especial friends. Each Thursday the club gives some informal entertainment under direction of a member designated as Sire for the evening. A few years ago Fong announced, "I give pa'ty," and he did—to the whole membership able to attend. "Fong Night," it was called, and there were Chinese food and Chinese music and souvenirs for everybody, and there was a notable gathering to do him honor. And through him, I think, to his beloved vanishing race.

¹This was written years ago.

Some People Collect Snuffboxes



Some People Collect Snuffboxes

VII

LIVING VERY SIMPLY in the old days, with one Chinaman as our whole staff of service, we nevertheless had as a very good friend a man of great wealth and possessions. These did not spoil him in the least. Except that he had the secretary habit. Secretaries are like liquor in that they must be used with moderation, and never so as unnecessarily to annoy others in such a manner as to constitute a breach of the peace. Also, like liquor, the habit of them is insidious and is likely to grow without the victim's realization. Telephone rings. "Mrs. White?" "Yes." "Mr. Jackson would like to speak to you; hold the line, please." And you hold the line, and you hold the line, until Mr. Jackson is sought at the farthest corner of his extensive domains. At the end of ten minutes you hear his voice, and are supposed to be happy and snappy about it.

But at this point in the formula Mrs. White one day introduced a variation.

"Hullo! Hullo!" called Mr. Jackson cheerily, "Mrs. White?"

"No," said Mrs. White, "this is Mrs. White's maid.

Hold the line, please. I'll call her." And she laid the receiver alongside, and before she picked it up again waited calmly the exact length of time by the clock it had taken Mr. Jackson to get there.

Joel Fithian was another who was rarely caught off base. And he could dissemble and wait. A number of us sat at a round table and listened to an Englishman not long in our country. This Englishman had had a number of drinks, which seemed to make him think we were all sympathizing with his disgust of all things American. He confided to us happily, and at great length, how he had managed to get along in the beastly place.

"I conceal what I think, you know," he told us. "I keep my thoughts to myself. Nobody knows that I'm seeing how rotten are your—" and so far into the night in a catalogue of the rotten things about which he had kept silent. And he rounded off each separate item with a recitation of his system: "But I keep quiet about it, you know. And that's how I get along so well."

It was our club, and he was our guest. We could not kill him, nor maim him, and our probably rotten code of courtesy prevented our even being rude to him. So we just humped down lower and lower behind our drinks. All but Joe. He leaned forward, beaming with interest, nodding approval. As each point was ticked off, he voiced this approval.

"You're right; you're quite right!" he cried heartily.

We looked on Joe with growing wonder and irritation and deep disappointment, for we all had loved Joe, and that he should thus show himself a renegade cut us to the heart. At long last the Englishman had finished his plaint, sat back. Joe clapped him on the knee.

"You're right; you're quite right," he repeated his formula for the last time, "that is the only way I got along in England!"

A man I know of in San Francisco was outraged one merry Yuletide, on returning to his car, to find it had been entered and a package stolen. No great value was involved, but he was greatly annoyed. He lived alone in an apartment, and cooked his own breakfast. Each morning thereafter he collected the eggshells, coffee grounds, dead toast, and other knickknacks of garbage, did them all up in a neat package, tied it with bright holly ribbon, plastered it over gaily with Christmas seals, and left it on the seat of his car downtown. It worked admirably. He not only got rid of his garbage, but also found real use for Christmas seals. Another good use for the latter, by the way, is to paste them in patterns on all your trunks and suitcases. Anybody who has traveled much knows that it is impossible to devise a system of stripes or colors that is unique. But nobody thinks of Christmas seals. You can identify your baggage as far as you can see it.

Sometimes a man rates inclusion among one's bibelots,

not so much for readiness of wit as for the sheer nerve to do the obvious. One of our Class-A pests is the sort of person who assumes that you recall him instantly at sight, or remember accurately the letter he wrote you two months back. He clasps your hand, and beams, and gurgles on; and you stall along with all the skill of fence you possess, fishing for a clue that will enable you to identify him. Ordinarily, he rubs it in by challenging you joyously:

"You don't remember me!"

There are various things that can be done in this situation. As follows:

(a) Direct Action. Kill him. Highly desirable, but expensive.

(b) Graceful Avoidance. "I remember you perfectly; but your beautiful and altogether appropriate name for the moment escapes me." Good, but not a panacea. His name may be Snoggins.

(c) Passing the Buck. "I remember you perfectly. But I'll bet you don't remember at whose dinner we first met!" Nine times in ten you first met at dinners. This either passes the worry on to him, or he'll give you a clue.

(d) Brutal Honesty. Exemplified by one of the most considerate and courteous men of my acquaintance who wouldn't ordinarily hurt the feelings of a Gila monster. He was head of a large corporation. He had finished a terrific two weeks of financing. He was walking across

the main floor of the Grand Central, tired, relaxed, full of anticipation of a long, quiet journey home. Up to him rushed a lady, holding out both hands in greeting. She was a beautiful lady, young, well-dressed, obviously well-bred.

"Oh, Mr. Browning!" she cried. "I'm so glad to see you! You don't remember me, do you?"

Browning looked at her coldly.

"Why should I?" said he, and passed on.

I have known Browning over thirty years, and this was, as far as my knowledge goes, his first impoliteness. The method is effective, but, I fear, impractical. It requires not only courage, but a certain unnatural brutal ruthlessness born of circumstances. Personally, I have used it but once. This fellow offered to wager, as usual, that I did not recognize his voice—over the telephone. It shortly developed that I had last heard it thirty-eight years before!

(e) Modified Honesty. Before relinquishing the hand-clasp, squint the eyes slightly and say simply, on the risingly hopeful accent:

"Give me a clue."

If done just right, this has several effects. Your—well, your opponent—believes that he is just on the tip of your tongue, so to speak, and that you are hovering on the edge of falling into his arms. He is delicately and indirectly flattered in that *he* thinks that *you* think he is

intelligent enough to realize that, meeting people all over the world as you do, it is sometimes difficult to connect up China and Santa Barbara on the spur of the moment. That point is subtle, but it is a good one. And sometimes his mention of China, or London, or Tanganyika, or whatnot is actually a clue; and the haunting familiarity of his face does click into remembrance, and you experience genuine pleasure at the meeting.

This method is better than the bald and commonplace your-face-is-familiar-but-I-can't-quite-place-your-name stall, which carries no conviction at all. If he is impervious, then the only recourse is Method A. Of course Method A is, after all, the only one that ethically meets the situation. It is a pity it is illegal. Every child should be taught, as a matter of routine, and of ordinary self-preservation, the proper formula to be used in greeting any acquaintance after a lapse of time.

"Why, Mr. White! How are you? You remember me—Binghampton Snoggins? I'll never forget the time that catawampus bit you in the ear!"

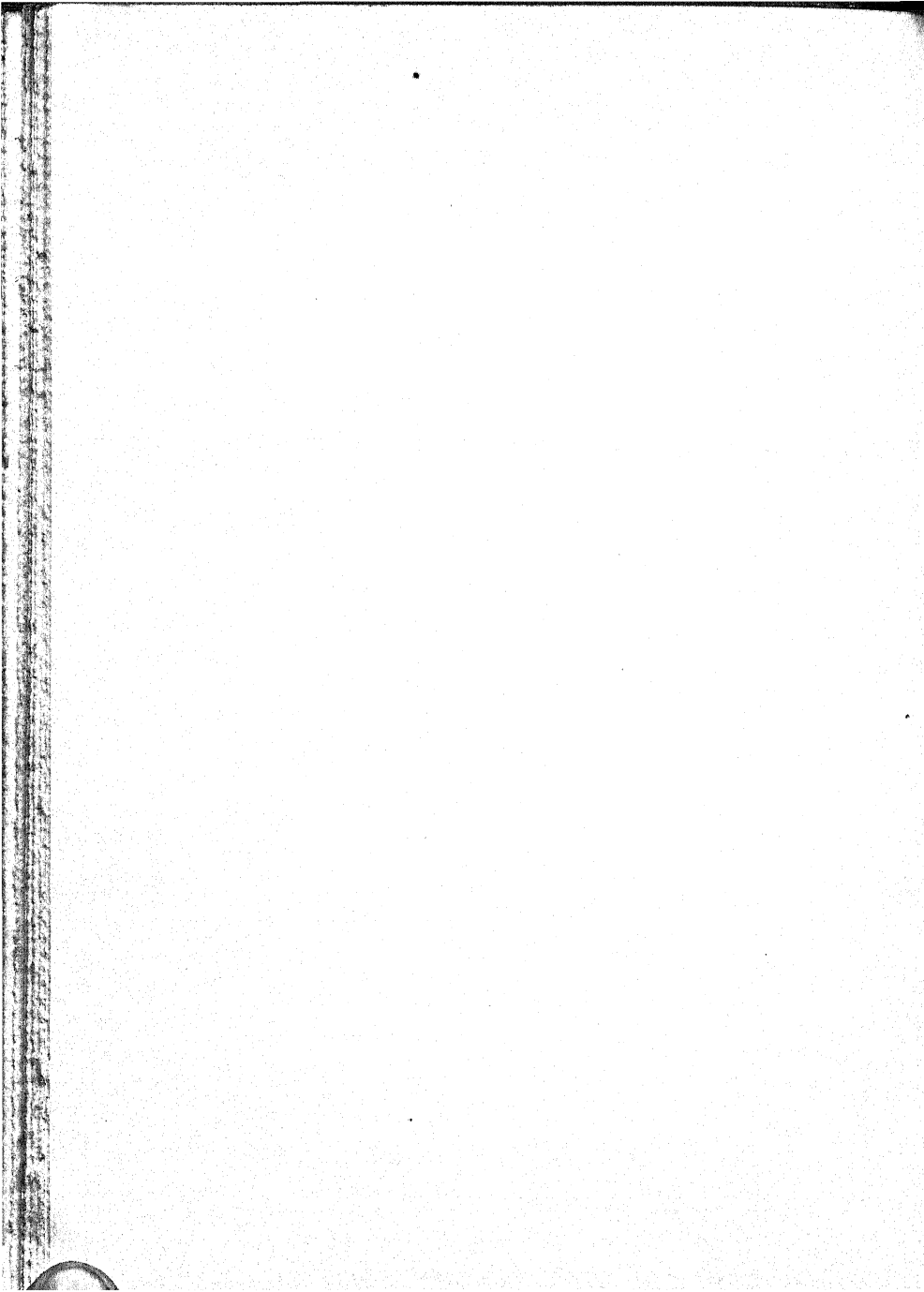
Perfect. He gives his name: he mentions something so personal to myself that I am not likely to have forgotten it; and at the same time he delicately implies that I really need no such reminders. I'll buy that fellow a drink, even if I still do not recall him.

I think I'll finish this exhibit of my treasures with an example of profound philosophy, whose value is in no

way diminished by the fact that it was quite unconscious, and that its reference was merely to the game of golf. It applies as well to life itself.

Mrs. White and another woman were playing together. On the tenth fairway this woman stopped short in her tracks.

"Do you know," said she with decision, "I *can* play this game a lot better than I am—but I never do!"



Adventure



Adventure

VIII

IN THE EARLIEST DAYS of the Forest Service, before there were any made trails in the High Sierra, one of the newly appointed officials and I were yarning one evening over experiences. He told me of an occasion in early spring when he and his wife were going, horseback of course, from Miller's Bridge to one of the newly built cabins across Kaiser Pass. Since they expected to make use of the equipment in the cabin, they had no pack animal with them.

That is a high and remote country. By the time they had reached the ford at South Fork it was snowing hard. The ford they found to be deeper than they had expected, and as the water rose and rose toward the horses' backs, they climbed higher and higher until finally they were kneeling atop their saddles, and very precariously balanced. They were good at this sort of thing, however, and would probably have got through without the dreaded wetting, but suddenly, without warning, both horses stumbled, then began to flounder, finally fell struggling, as though entrapped by something under water, as indeed they were. For, as it afterward developed, a loose coil of barbed wire intended for some horse

or sheep corral at some herder's summer range had a short time before been lost from a pack animal, had fallen into the pothole of the ford, and there had lain in wait for the next unfortunate.

My friend had a terrible time. He was very lucky that he did not lose one or both horses; indeed, that in the wallowing, threshing, kicking mess he had to tackle he was not himself kicked or drowned. But he got them ashore somehow, without more damage than barbed-wire cuts and with only a few bruises on his own account.

And there they were, dripping wet, at about seven thousand feet, in a snowstorm, a cold wind blowing off the glacier peaks.

"That," concluded the Forest man, "was the most uncomfortable I've ever been, I think." He paused, and chuckled, "But it was an Adventure, wasn't it? After all," he added philosophically, "an adventure is only a discomfort turned inside out."

That is a mighty handy definition of a discomfort to have with one. Often, when things are going about as badly as they possibly can go, the thought cheers one immensely. If a fellow can just realize that he is having a bona-fide, guaranteed, genuine Adventure he can stand almost anything. Nine times in ten, when he gets home and looks it over, it does turn out to be an Adventure, too.

But though it is a useful definition of a discomfort it is not quite complete as a definition of Adventure. I can remember plenty of adventures that were attended by no discomfort at all.

For example: in the old days in the Black Hills I knew a man whom I have used in fiction as Billy Knapp. But no fiction could possibly do him justice, for no one would believe it all. Billy was supposed to be part Cherokee Indian. He was six feet two, straight as an arrow; with black hair which he wore rather long, frowning black eyebrows that ran nearly straight across his head over piercing eyes, a mustache, and a spot of whisker on his lower lip that was almost a goatee. He had run away from his home in Missouri at the age of eight, had been adopted by a tribe of Indians, had grown up in the buffalo-hunting, Indian-fighting days of Buffalo Bill, old Jim Bridger, Slade, Wild Bill Hickok. He was an especial pal of the latter, and traveled across four states to be present at the hanging of Wild Bill's murderer. He had taken a go at stage driving in and near the Yellowstone until he clashed with some monopoly or other in that business. The rival company displayed its concession in vain. Billy went right on driving. Returning his stage load of tourists to the railroad one day, he found one of the company's men digging postholes. Billy pulled up his horses and contemplated the performance.

"What you aimin' to do?" he asked mildly at last.

"We're aimin' to put up a fence that'll keep you out," replied the men, grinning maliciously.

"So?" said Billy. "Well, you'd better quit it."

The workmen merely laughed. Billy drew one of his ivory-handled Colt's and flattened a bullet against the man's shovel.

"I really think you'd better quit," he repeated mildly. Whereupon the men quit.

But, of course, Billy could not stay there; and when next his four-horse-stage load of tourists topped the rise above the station he found that in his absence it had been enclosed with a substantial fence whose gate was guarded by an individual of much more determination than a mere posthole digger. Billy pulled to a stop, sized up the situation. Then he gathered his reins firmly.

"Hang on, everybody!" he shouted, and with a wild yell brought his long-lashed whip in a neat figure eight across the backs of his startled horses. The heavy stage dashed down the hill at a tremendous speed straight at the fence. The leaders rose at it, stumbled, half fell. The tongue of the stage knocked part of it loose. The wheelers somehow tore wider the gap. With a tremendous crash the stage jounced over the wreckage. By a miracle of strength and skill Billy managed to yank his horses to their feet, to keep his stage right side up. With a flourish he drew up alongside the station platform.

"All right, folks, here we are!" he cheerfully told his

passengers. They were shaken, but I'll wager they considered they had had quite an Adventure.

Shortly afterward Billy was excluded from the country as a "dangerous character." He drifted east to the Black Hills. There he became a government scout and was one of those who first guided Custer into those forbidden fastnesses.

All this is preliminary to my own thoroughly comfortable adventures in Billy's company.

At the time I knew him he had become interested in gold mining. We were thrown much together and made in company long journeys horseback to one place or another. Early one morning we were jogging along the prairies to the east of the Hills when we passed one of the rare "nester's" ranch houses. It was a hopeless and miserable affair of poles and mud, with one door, one window, and a clay chimney. From it dashed one of those peculiarly annoying dogs who consider it funny not only to bark at the wayfarer, but to dash in and out biting sharply at the horses' hind legs. Our animals were only half broken and the morning was frosty, so shortly we had our hands full. And the more the horses plunged and bucked the more the dog dashed about and bit and barked. Finally, as we drew away, he concluded he had had all the fun he wanted, and started back. We quieted the horses. Very deliberately, without excitement, Billy dismounted, handed me the reins of his horse, and moved

toward the dog. The latter promptly clamped his tail and bolted back to the ranch house. Billy did not hurry. Quite slowly he strolled after the dog, who darted in through the door. Watching, I saw Billy saunter to the door, peer within. Then, still unhurriedly, he drew his revolver and fired twice. With the same deliberation he returned the gun to its holster, returned to where I sat with the two horses, retrieved his reins, mounted. We resumed our journey.

I knew his type too well to comment or to ask questions. Only after we had jogged along for several miles did I at last venture to inquire:

"How about it, Billy?"

"He dodged under the table where the family was eatin' breakfast," Billy told me mildly, "but I got him," he added.

Somehow I felt I had had an Adventure, and I am very certain the "family" did.

All this is preliminary, so you may know Billy better, before I tell you my real Adventure with him.

Billy possessed the secret of some sort of distillation or concoction he made from a certain herb. The result was a liquid so pungent and volatile that on the skin it stung like a burn, but without any real blistering. Billy's great joke was to drop some of this on a man's hand.

Now at this time the Sioux Indians had only just been subdued. The midwinter battle of Wounded Knee, in

which Sitting Bull's surviving warriors had been killed, was only a few years in the past. They were herded on reservations, the nearest of which was the Rosebud Agency, but the country was still very uneasy, the tribe restless, and nobody was ever certain that more trouble would not break out. Once a year they came up into the Hills, ostensibly to cut their supply of tepee poles. These encampments were an interesting and savage spectacle, for the whole outfit came along, men, women, children, horses, dogs.

Billy proposed we ride over. Of course I agreed. It was only when we had arrived, and were definitely there, and I could not gracefully withdraw, that I discovered Billy's happy little scheme.

He had brought along a small squirt gun and a bottle of his diabolical mixture, and he was going to have some fun, Billy's kind of fun.

He waited until a very dignified old chap with all his equipment had mounted his cayuse, then sneaked near enough secretly to squirt some of his mixture on the animal. Instantly the air was full of astonishment and moccasins and frying-pans and eagle feathers and bows and arrows and Indian profanity, and the immediate vicinity boiling with a panic scattering of those within range of the frantic horse. And Billy rolled about on the grass laughing his fool head off.

His laughter did not make us precisely popular. But

my realization was complete that if those Sioux discovered the connection between Billy and that wild upheaval our lives would be expensive at two cents a dozen. And that was not the worst of it: when this show was over, Billy insisted on doing it again! By the end of that hectic afternoon I was a wreck. But fool's luck was with us, and we returned to our own camp undiscovered and unharmed. Billy was immensely tickled. And I felt that certainly I had had an Adventure if there ever was one.

Those were the old rough days of the West, and Billy's ideas of either retribution or humor fitted the times. I do not uphold him in all respects as a model for Boy Scouts, in our sense, though he was a remarkable scout in the technical sense. He had the knack of providing adventures for both himself and those who happened to be with him. And he helped us to understand a little better what an Adventure is.

I should say it is any experience whatever that gives one an emotional thrill, either at the time or when one thinks about it later. That, to be sure, opens up a pretty wide field, so that one might conceivably find adventure almost any morning without going outside the back yard. But I think it is a good definition, for it leads us to the real secret of the whole matter; and that is that we ourselves contribute a large part of any adventure by our own attitude. Some people, like my Forestry friend, can get the emotional thrill—the “kick”—out of even getting

tangled in barbed wire and falling down in a stream. Other poor creatures, without the spark in them, I've seen stand yawning in the very face of Adventure herself.

So when anybody asks me to tell them my best adventure, I find it very difficult to comply. I've been having adventures all my life, tons of them, and they have all been perfectly genuine adventures in that I got the proper "kick" from them. It might seem that one would most certainly get the biggest thrill from those occasions when he has been in danger of his life, but that does not follow. I have happened to be in danger of my life quite a respectable number of times, and, strange as it may seem, some of them thrilled me very little. When one bums around enough in odd and queer places and circumstances one early becomes a sincere subscriber to the "miss-is-as-good-as-a-mile" philosophy. The thing happens; it misses by even a hair's breadth; it is over; you go about the job without bothering about what might have happened.

An Adventure does not have to be in the least dangerous. The appeal to the imagination is enough. When I was a lad I lived all of one winter in a logging camp in Michigan's northern peninsula. The country was then very wild and remote, and the methods and the camps crude. The almost unbroken forest was full of game. Especially there were a great many deer, and in conse-

quence numbers of timber wolves, big, fine, shaggy animals, about as large as a St. Bernard dog. They traveled in packs; and they were very clever at catching the deer by chasing them in relays while the rest of the pack cut across lots. At night we could nearly always hear them hunting. But—and this is the point—they were quite harmless to man. As far as my knowledge goes there has never been a well-authenticated case of an attack by wolves in this country. I have traced down a number of these cross-my-heart-I-knew-the-man-who tales, and they have vanished into thin air when an actual eyewitness was demanded.

Especial poppycock is that recurrent bit we read about once in so often of the skater, pursued by the ravening pack, who saves himself by his sudden doublings and twistings. Wolves will not venture on the ice at all, even in pursuit of their own proper quarry, the deer. One morning we found on the glassy surface of a pond, not ten paces from the shore, a young buck that had taken refuge from the wolves. He had fallen down and was unable to get up again because the ice was too smooth. Wolf tracks trampled the snow ashore right down to the pond, but not one had ventured onto the ice, even with the prey so temptingly close and helpless.

But though the wolf was a harmless enough creature, he was alarming to the tenderfoot simply because he, like Kipling's elephant child, was possessed by a "satiabile

curtiosity," especially at night. One not accustomed to the country, tramping down a skid road in the dark, and suddenly becoming aware that a pack of wolves was following him, and accompanying him perhaps on either side, was extremely likely to climb a tree or a skid pile and yell his head off for help. If no help was forthcoming, he would probably roost until morning in a temperature well below zero. We have solemnly "rescued" a number of such people, and I doubt if any amount of assertion would convince them that they were not "attacked by wolves."

Two miles and five miles from us were two other camps belonging to the same company. There were no roads between them, only snowshoe trails through the forest. Sometimes of an evening I used to snowshoe over to see friends. On such occasions I used to wear strapped to my cap a "jack light," a small lantern of the bull's-eye pattern. Almost invariably I used to pick up—or they picked me up—a small pack of wolves. Why they should accompany me I do not know; probably out of sheer curiosity. They usually pattered along abreast of me, one side or the other, and ten to twenty yards away. By turning my head very quickly I was sometimes able to shine their eyes for a brief instant. I knew they were harmless, but I was young enough and imaginative enough to get an adventurous thrill from the situation.

One night when I was just about halfway between the

other camp and home my lantern gave out, nor could I mend it. I had to proceed very slowly, feeling each step with the greatest care for the slightly packed snow of the trail. Once off the track I would be lost until morning, for the dense forest shut off any help from the stars. It was a slow and delicate job, and I confess I did considerable wondering as to the conduct of my friends, the wolves—how much had they been held off by the fire of the lantern, what would they do if I should stumble and fall down? As a matter of fact they did nothing. But I felt I had had an adventure; and I acquired considerable sympathy for the tenderfeet we had “rescued” from trees and the tops of skid piles.

Most adventures come to one by chance, and are unrecognized until they actually present themselves, and often not until they are all over. One of the few pursuits I have ever gone at deliberately, in the knowledge that they would almost certainly supply adventure, has been the still-hunting of African lions on foot. I have known a few people, of limited experience, who delight in asserting that there is, barring accident, really “nothing to lion hunting.” That attitude is partly ignorance and partly a vague, obscure, and indirect pose. By scorning as trivial what other men are willing to acknowledge as difficult they somehow feel they make themselves out as much bigger fellows than the other men. I know of several such. They have, backed by a competent guide, shot

two or three or four lions, in picked and favorable circumstances, and have had the luck to down them in their tracks. Then they have, perhaps luckily for themselves, returned home before anything else happened, to tell anybody who would listen to them that there was "nothing to it." Possibly that is better than posturing as mighty lion hunters on the strength of a shot or so from a safe platform in a tree.

But anybody who has followed this game long enough to have got past luck into averages knows that the lion is a very unexpected, very chancy, and very formidable creature to tackle alone and afoot. Ask Leslie Simson, or Klein, or Tarlton, or any really experienced lion men. The fact that it is perfectly possible to kill a lion in his tracks by a single well-placed shot means very little. The withstanding of even one determined charge at close quarters quite alters the point of view. One then appreciates the quickness, tenacity, and power of the beasts. Above all, one has a vivid sense of what a misfire, or a defective cartridge, or a split second's fumbling can mean. And thereafter each lion is a possibility; and when in the course of one's hunting a man gets a potshot, he accepts it thankfully as a break in the game. Even the most favorable circumstances may suddenly develop complications; and often do.

I have been lucky enough to have made three long trips to Central Africa, and to have traveled in remote

country unvisited by white men in search of sport, where all sorts of big game swarm in literally hundreds of thousands.

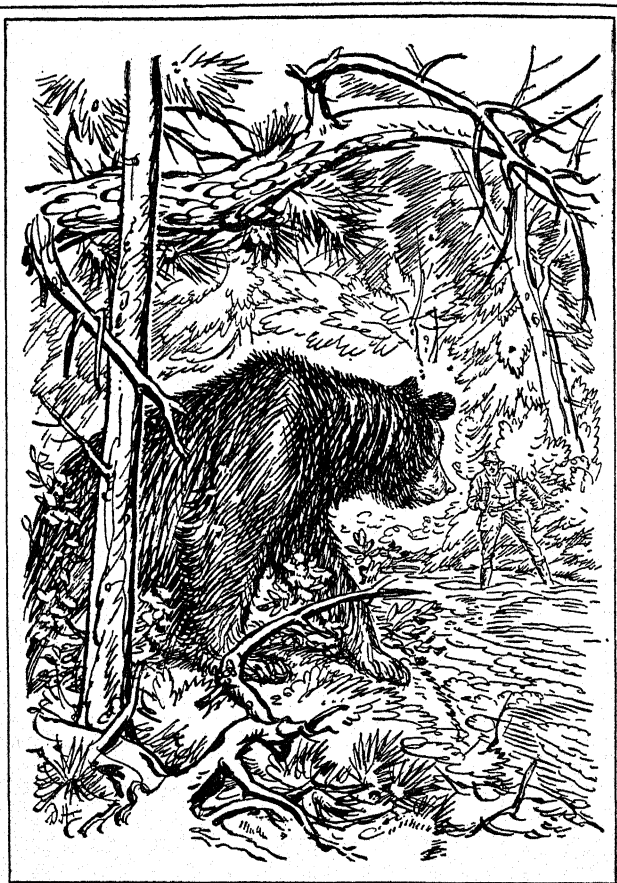
The shooting of game in such circumstances soon becomes a matter of food supply, and the collecting of specimens quite subservient to exploration, natural-history observation, and contact with savages. The only shooting that retained its sporting element was the still-hunting of lions; and that never lost its thrill. And for this reason: of the seventy-three I killed, twenty-eight charged and would certainly have got me if I had not got them first.

This proportion of charges was very unusual and was due to a number of circumstances, many of which might have been avoided had the mere killing of lions been the main object, such as the fact that in many parts of the country the lions had never been hunted and were very bold, the desire on the part of my companions at one time to shoot lions with arrows or to take photographs, my own determination never to leave a wounded animal to suffer or become a menace to the natives, and the fact that I generally still-hunted them afoot. The inevitable narrow escapes were certainly thrilling adventures to me; but also the easy times, when nothing untoward happened, had a tremendous kick in that I could never tell until it was all over.

But while some experiences, more than others, thus do

contain the possibilities of adventure, I think the old epigram is indubitably true: that adventure is to the adventurous. The born adventurer attracts adventure to himself in the most unlikely circumstances, where he of humdrum expectations meets only the commonplace. Zest, an eager imagination, an unashamed joy in what life brings, these are the precious ingredients. If you do not believe it, look at your little kid brother; he has wonderful adventures with a couple of rugs and the dining-room chairs. You would not, of course, but there are about you plenty of materials for high emprise, if only you recognize them and go to meet them.

C.Q.



C.Q.

IX

IF A MAN LIVES LONG ENOUGH, and moves about enough, and tells of everything he experiences or sees, he will finish up with a reputation as an amusing liar. Some people do not mind being considered liars as long as they are, at the same time, considered amusing. The only trouble with that is that sometimes one needs to be believed. So the only way is to shut up about those things, or, if they are to be narrated at all, to tell them with the twinkle that puts them in the category of golf lies and fish lies—venial lies that wash off without damage. The best way is to shut up. The twinkle advertises that you do not expect them to be believed; and when you know by the evidence of your own two eyes that they actually happened, it seems traitorous, somehow, to turn them over to fiction. Better to keep them as pets.

I've had my share, and I've managed to shut up. From time to time I have pet schemes to which I want to persuade the public; so, when I state anything, I want it taken as a fact. Occasionally I have tried one on a close friend, to see how he would stand the strain. He has always been polite. Perhaps he believed what I told him;

I don't know. People are believing more and more these days. Here are a few minor examples of what I mean. They are not from my stock of what, to most people, would be the wholly incredible—just the raised-eyebrow grade. A sort of test of C.Q., which is a new one, corresponding to the psychologists' I.Q., and means Credibility Quotient.

Everybody is familiar with the play spirit in animals. Puppies, lambs, colts, deer, and all young creatures gambol on the green and chase one another about, and generally have a high old time. Birds do a lot of miscellaneous flying, both singly and in flocks, that has nothing to do with food, or nesting, or travel, or anything else but exuberance. Porpoises that have been rolling over lazily on the bosom of the deep come a-running when they catch the beat of your propeller, to dart across the bow of your swiftly moving craft, back and forth, almost grazing the stem, for hours at a time. And nothing in it for any of them but fun. Everybody knows that.

But some years ago, in Alaska, for the first time, I saw wild creatures playing a game with rules. I was roosting concealed at the edge of a gravel bar, waiting for some bears to come out so I could take their pictures. The grizzlies of Alaska are not yet Hollywood-conscious, so such a wait often extends a week or more. It is not, however, a tedious wait, for there are plenty of things to watch. On this particular occasion I was interested in

three ravens. Ravens are very amusing. They utter more sorts of conversation than any other creature in the woods. Undoubtedly they command a definite language, and they love gossip for its own sake. I recognize many of its words, though I am uncertain of their exact meaning. Any time you may wish to annoy a raven, tell him "kla-wock." These three were on the wing overhead. One of them carried in his beak what looked to be a small fish. The other two were darting at him, trying to get him to drop the fish, and he was whirling and wheeling and dodging to keep out of their way. For a dozen flaps of the wing he held the fish in his beak. Then, with a quick jerk, he transferred it to his claws and carried it tucked under his belly. After a dozen or so more flaps he chucked it forward from his claws and snatched it into his beak again. This alternation he repeated at regular and brief intervals, and each time he made the exchange the other two dashed at him, yelling at the tops of their voices, beating their pinions, trying to rattle him into missing that fish. He was remarkably quick and accurate, but after a time he did make a miss and dropped it. The other two plunged down after it as it fell, and one managed to snatch it before it reached the ground. Then this one proceeded to do exactly as the first had been doing—tossed it from beak to claw and back again, while the other two tried to block the pass. After five minutes or so they came very near me, so I could distinguish plainly.

Then I saw that the object of their contest was not a fish at all, but a piece of stick four or five inches long. This was no mere struggle for a titbit. It was a game—a game of tag, of miss-and-out, with definite rules. The reader will mark the C.Q. on this from 0 to 100.

The sense of play is closely allied to the sense of humor, a quality which, along with reason, some psychologists deny to the "lower animals." On a similar occasion, again while waiting for bears, I was sitting opposite the spire of a spruce so long dead that its branches had all fallen away, leaving only a few brittle stublets at right angles to its bole. A fat, well-fed burgomaster of a raven came flying in dignity down the stream, curved upward, spread his tail, lowered his feet, and settled on the roost of one of the stublets with a lazy half folding of the wings. The branch snapped short off. He fell squawking for ten feet or more before he could catch himself, then flopped across, to settle in the top of a small fir. I never saw a groucher or more disgruntled-looking bird. His feathers were ruffled, his head was sunk between his shoulders. He was a picture of thorough disgust. He sat exactly so, brooding on his indignity, for fully ten minutes. Then down the stream sailed a second raven and proceeded to do exactly the same thing. And when the twig broke and he came tumbling down, the first one smoothed his feathers and raised his head and his voice, and haw-hawed at the top of his lungs, and generally

gave the new victim of this practical joke the razzberry. Then they both flew away, the second raven silent and humiliated, the first still laughing his fool head off.

But the biggest joke of all, to ravens, as well as to crows and gulls, is when an eagle comes a cropper. An eagle is fair game for this ribald crew. They like to flop and wheel about him, like a swarm of mosquitoes, screaming and yelling to one another what they think of eagles, darting down from above almost to peck him on the back. Almost, but not quite. The fellow who can come nearest is the moment's hero. The eagle pays them no attention, but proceeds upon his stately way as though they were not there. Though swifter of wing than they, he is slower on the turn, and he prefers to ignore them rather than sully his dignity in rowdy dodgings. But there is a limit to his patience; his tormentors know it, and try to avoid overstepping it. For when they do, one of them is surely doomed. The eagle picks the worst of them as his victim and gives chase, vindictively, wholeheartedly, and with complete singleness of purpose; nor does he permit himself to be deflected from his object. The terror-stricken bird doubles and turns, tries to lose himself in the trees, darts through other flocks, hoping to confuse himself in the multitude. His friends wheel and flutter across his path, trying in vain to distract the eagle, or lure him aside in pursuit of fresher quarry. Nothing doing. "Eye like an eagle" is right. The chase may be

long, but it can have only one ending, after which the eagle proceeds on his way and the ribald gang falls to chastened silence—for a while.

But occasionally, as has been said, the eagle comes a cropper. His swoop to catch a fish is magnificent. He drops like a plummet, sometimes from a great height, with a grand swish of wind through his half-closed pinions. When within six inches or so of the surface of the water, wings and tail spread wide to check his swoop, his great yellow claws lower and seize; he flaps lazily away, the fish struggling. Talk about timing! Once in a while, however, he miscalculates by the hundredth part of a second. He hits the water with a splash. He cannot rise from its surface. He cannot swim. He has to propel himself to shore paddling awkwardly and painfully with his wings, with complete loss both of dignity and of self-respect. It takes him some time; and when he gets there, every crow, gull, and raven within telepathic distance is on hand as a reception committee. The trees are full of them, and the rocks along the shore. They do not now annoy him by false attack. They just sit there and laugh. It's a grand moment for them. I do not know whether the eagle stays to live it down, or moves away and changes his name.

These, and similar things, look like a sense of humor to me. Anyway somebody has a good time. And if anybody can prove that animals do not reason, then, by the

same arguments, I will prove that neither do most human beings.

At least a bear friend of mine had an idea. In the season of the salmon run, bears catch a good many fish. There is a persistent legend to the effect that they do it by scooping them out with their paws. I have never happened to see this; nor has anybody else with whom I have talked on the subject. Generally they either grab the fish in their mouths, as would a dog, or pounce upon them with their paws. Incidentally, they appear to like to carry them by the tail, which would seem a very slippery hold. A bear carrying a fish thus is a very smug and virtuous-looking creature, his head held high, his teeth clamped tight, his prize flopping. A few I have seen wait on the gravel bar until a number of salmon are gathered on the riffles, and then dash forward at full speed to hurl themselves, all four paws outspread, smack across the shallows—like a football player falling on the ball. It is quite a sight. But this friend of mine had another system. It seemed to be equally successful, and involved much less running about. Fish are lively people.

He was on one side of the stream, paralleling it in the brush. I was on the other side, also in the brush. I had been following along opposite him for some time. I wanted his picture. Finally I started to wade across the stream, hoping to head him off. He was farther along than I thought, and I glanced up to see him gazing at me

from the brush on the opposite bank. Instantly I froze to complete immobility. Evidently he had but that instant appeared, for he did not depart, but continued to stare fixedly, trying to make me out. After a long time he came to the conclusion that I was part of the landscape. He slid down the bank, waded out into the stream and, after a few preliminary wallows, eased himself down with a grunt of satisfaction until he lay, the current dividing about his head and shoulders.

I remained frozen, except that I slowly raised the movie camera to my eye. The murmur of the waters drowned its whir, and I got my picture. He was about twenty-five feet distant. It was a hot day, so my thought was that he was cooling off, taking a comfortable bath. But at the end of perhaps three minutes I saw a slight but quick heave of his shoulders, and an instant later he produced a fine salmon, which he carried leisurely to the bank. He had quite simply lain still until the salmon thought he was a log. No fuss, no running about, no plunging and spattering; he did not even wet his head and shoulders. And entirely original. Never before or since have I seen a bear do his fishing in this manner. Somebody must have thought things out.

One has many such out-of-door experiences which one tells only when one does not care whether he is believed or not. If you can't swallow it, why, I'm not surprised, and no hard feelings. But we had one experience, in

civilization, which, at the time and since, we have always considered amusing, but quite credible. Nevertheless, it has elicited more hoots, or polite smiles, as the case may be, than any of the frankly outrageous inventions with which occasionally I seek to destroy my reputation.

We crossed a lake to a very beautiful country place. A slope to the beach, with trees of the forest primeval; lawns and rhododendrons and hydrangeas, and suchlike, near the house; the latter low and wide, with broad verandas and gay awnings and bamboo curtains and oriental lazy chairs and plate-glass windows to the floor, through which we could see a big fireplace and a polished, dark floor and more low, rakish chairs, and such things. We had never been there before, and our friends who owned the place proved to be away. We peered into the attractive interior and wandered down the broad veranda, and so brought up finally before the cage of a bird hanging in the sunshine.

He was a trifle smaller than a robin, trim built, and was shiny black all over except that his eyelids and two pear-shaped, fleshy pendants hanging on either side of his head like ear tabs were brilliant yellow. He was humped on his perch, his feathers fluffed, his eyes closed. We thought him a handsome bird, and expressed our admiration. For some time he paid us no attention. Then slowly one eye opened.

"This," remarked the bird to us, "is a hell of a life."

His enunciation was good. His voice had none of the usual croaking-down-the-rain-barrel, parrot quality usual to talking birds.

Surprised, we nevertheless agreed with him that it must be. He surveyed us until we had finished. Then the yellow eyelid closed.

We tried to engage him further in conversation. Nothing doing. He ignored us. Finally, once more the yellow eyelid lifted.

"Now," the bird told us, "I think you'd better take a walk."

Obediently we tiptoed away, leaving him to his Nirvanic meditations.

Fish stories are proverbially good ratings for any C.Q. test. Indeed, no test is complete without one.

I think trout were invented in Alaska and tried out there to see if they would work. Our yacht had a deep-anchoring gadget that enabled us to drop the hook in anything up to sixty fathoms of water. Since, in many of the bays and inlets, the flats drop off from a depth of two or three feet straight down to thirty-five or forty fathoms, this enabled us to stop at places no other boat can visit. The streams have never been fished. They are clear, fast, and so cold that one's feet numb through the rubber boots. As a consequence, the trout are hard fleshed, game beyond belief, and so numerous that we fished with barbless hooks, weighed them on the snell,

and put them back, beautifully exercised. One day I announced, before setting out, that I would bring back nothing under four pounds—I returned with nine. One of our guests was a fanatic angler. Alaska, to him, was just an appurtenance to fish. We named him, therefore, the Kingfish. One evening, from a boat just off the beach, we were all watching, in breathless awe, two of the big brown grizzlies playing on the tide flat with only a narrow strip of water between us. It was something to look upon—beasts weighing more than half a ton apiece chasing each other like puppies. After a time the Kingfish made the first and only comment on the spectacle.

“By Jove!” he whispered excitedly, “I believe I saw a herring jump!”

Constitutionally a leader of forlorn hopes, I thought I would see if I could fill the Kingfish up on fishing. We started early. We fished one stretch of fast water perhaps three hundred yards in length. We alternated. By about three o'clock we had caught, weighed, and released eighty-six trout apiece. The smallest was a pound and a quarter; the largest just under six. I gave up and called him off. We went back to the yacht, where I dived below for a shower and change. Returning to the deck, I found the Kingfish fishing overside with a hand line for whatever might come along.

All this is preliminary, just to give you background. Now I will make a categorical statement—and of fact.

Using three flies, in three successive casts, I once hooked, and landed, nine trout. The smallest was just under a pound and the largest just over a pound and a half.

The expert fisherman will understand just how much of a miracle this was. It is not too unusual, when fish are very abundant, to have all three of your flies swirled at, so to speak, as they touch the water. Then, of course, you must strike back, deftly and quickly, in the split second before the trout gets onto the deceit and spits them out. You are quite likely to fail in hooking even a single fish. But to snag all three is remarkable.

It is also not too unusual to have on two fish at once, a double-header. But having them on and landing them are two different things, though it is occasionally done. Two fish on at once fight against each other; one is likely to give the other the fatal slack which enables him to flip off the hook. And when it comes to landing them, it is all but impossible to net them successively and successfully. While you are dipping one, the other takes advantage of the loosened line. When it comes to three of a kind, these difficulties are not merely doubled, they are squared. The thing becomes miraculous.

But now multiply this whole performance by three again, and not only by three but by three in succession. Three successive casts. No blanks. Rate that on your C.Q. cards!

My Helper Falls Down



My Helper Falls Down

THIS IS A PLAIN STATEMENT of fact, stripped of all evasions and literary flapdoodle.

One spring the editor of a magazine, alive to its responsibility for the entire Pacific coast, and newly aware that there is still a lot of officially overlooked scenery north of Vancouver, B.C., chartered and equipped an adequate boat, found it with provisions, captains, cooks, and hooch (Siwash for sarsaparilla), and sent it north to remedy this oversight. He wanted to do the thing up brown, as witness the inclusion of the above-mentioned hooch. Sarsaparilla is brown, as everybody knows. It would have been entirely possible for him to have obtained the services of some of the gentlemen who write colored folders concerning the Advantages of the Yagoosh Valley beginning "Nestling in a valley between the mighty ranges of the Gollywatts lies a garden spot of Nature"; but he did not. He reached forth and got me and Wallace Irwin.

Personally, I am an expert scenery looker, and as Irwin is known as a bright lad it was hoped that a few lessons supplemented by his quick observation and temperamen-

tal enthusiasm would soon make him an assistant competent to take care of at least small fjords and minor waterfalls. If the temperamental enthusiasm could not stand the latitude, there was always the hooch.

Never was a plan better conceived, and we shoved off with high hopes. It soon became evident that this job was going to be no child's play. I had anticipated rather an easy time of it, to tell you the truth, with a pipe and a book on deck; or a salmon rod in a small boat; with occasionally an expert glance of an eye long practiced on Sierras and Grand Cañons and Africa and Hollywood and such, and with Irwin practicing on foothills and fog effects. But we were not two days on our voyage before I plainly perceived we had our work cut out for us.

The sea water turned inland, and we turned inland with it, feeling our way deep into the heart of great mountain ranges. The cliffs rose sheer on either hand to great heights, and above them the peaks kept on rising until they lost themselves each in its trailing cloud. Waterfalls leaped out into space from the upper ledges and roared exultantly into the sea that tossed white hands to greet them. The roar of them filled the water cañon with voices. Clouds formed and dissipated, veiling and revealing mighty summits, filling the side cañons and draining away, laying strata bands across the somber faces of pine forests; and always up the broad, steep valleys moved an army of mist wraiths that writhed and

twisted and marched ever upward until they were lost in the clouds. Before our prow the waters were dark like gun metal. Islets of rock crowned thickly with firs and cedars looked like so many milliner's creations. To the sheer cliffs clung trees and little bushes, standing on nothing, growing out of nothing, after the astounding fashion of their kind.

Of course this sort of thing could not last. The end of the passage was plain to be seen. But when we got there we turned a corner, and then another and another. There was no end to it. I dashed to the pilot room for a glance at the chart. This inlet was ninety miles long. Furthermore, the whole coast north looked like the filigreed paper they used to put on the pantry shelves.

Like a good general I gathered all available forces. Irwin and myself, of course, were the mercenaries; but I tried to enlist a little non-professional aid. There proved to be willingness enough, but very little actual assistance. When all that the downward-dropping spears of a thousand-foot waterfall can get out of a youth is "Oh gee, looky!" one sadly realizes that such assistance cannot be relied upon. Stanch enough under fire of anything up to a few thousand feet elevation, they broke and scattered badly when, as often happened, they were bombarded by range after range blanketed with the pure-white, unbroken snow fields that mean really great height.

"Come and look at this mountain!" we would yell down the hatch.

"I've seen one," would come the reply from a mouth full of pancakes.

And they were quite likely, at critical times, to be found wasting their precious attention on some dinky little seagull or clump of ferns when all sorts of titanic stuff was lying all over the place. The amateur has no sense of values and no discipline. You can never do a complete job with his assistance.

So I drew Irwin one side for consultation. I found him clearly demoralized. The amount of scenery to be looked at had overwhelmed him. This was due to his unaccustomedness, of course. He should have been started with the Ferry Building in San Francisco and worked up through Mt. Tamalpais on a Sunday. The result was a natural and very strong reaction looking toward defense. I am sorry to confess that even this early he began to lie down on me. As the job seemed too big for him, he began at once to try to pare it down, instead of trying to grow up to it. This, I must admit, was not so much weakness of character as common sense.

"Now look here," said he, "I don't know anything about this business; but isn't there a Scenery Lookers' Union? There ought to be. Take union hours, for instance. It's light up to midnight and it gets light again about two o'clock. And then there's these blasted moon-

light effects on the mountains, when they look like soap bubbles. There's got to be some limit. What are our hours, anyway?"

There seemed a lot of reason in that. Certainly no human could work through all of the daylight they'd saved up in this latitude. I suggested we might stand watch and watch; but Irwin firmly vetoed this proposition.

"I believe in delivering a fair amount of work for a fair wage," said he firmly, "but this scenery looking is darned hard work, and it makes you hungry."

This showed that he actually had been doing some honest looking, and I felt encouraged. Only he who has sat hour after hour in a deck chair conscientiously looking at all the scenery passed by an eight-knot boat can realize how physically exhausting it is and how eagerly one responds to the grub call. I have found that five proper meals a day is none too much for one engaged in this profession; with, of course, the usual light snacks between. So in order to have learned these basic truths Wallace must at least have begun his job.

I listened to him. I fell. He is a most persuasive talker.

"I don't see why we should kill ourselves trying to do a job too big for us," he pointed out. "Let's be honest, but reasonable."

Thus the Scenery Lookers' Union came into being.

The character and detailed policy is, of course, secret. But here are a few of the rules:

1. *Eight-hour day; with time and a half for overtime until 9:00 P.M. Moonlight and aurora borealis extra.*

2. *No more than ten (10) waterfalls from any one point.*

3. *Mountains over 9,000 feet extra; but provided that a reduction shall be made for lots of a dozen or more.*

4. *Unless swivel chairs are provided, panoramic views are extra.*

5. *Nothing less than 14,000-foot mountains, 1,000-foot waterfalls, eight seals, six Indians, or their equivalent shall be considered as sufficient to justify leaving a meal.*

There were others, of course, having to do with the use and distribution of adjectives, etc., but the list is too long to quote in full. Suffice it to say, when we had finished our consultation we had put the matter on an organized business basis, and I had some reason to believe that we were off to a flying start.

But this happy confidence did not last long. Regretfully I came to the conclusion that Irwin was not holding up his end. Fairness compels me to acknowledge that much of his apparent frivolity was due not to vice but to early training and association. He meant well. But instead of determining the export figures from Vancouver per annum in quintals of tar weed oil and slats, he hung

fascinated about rampant citizens in outlandish garb on their way to some convention. In lieu of calculating the approximate delivery per gallon hour of a waterfall half a mile high by ten feet wide at apex, he floated around in whirlpools snagging dead salmon in bootless conference with one of the amateurs. Nevertheless, I did not give up hope. I reflected that youth must have its fling; that perhaps beneath a flippant though unornamental exterior there might lurk perceptions that were even then engaged in storing their material in the subconscious mind. In every way I tried to aid him. For example, I asked him to look up only to 5,000 feet, and I would attend to the rest of the mountain. I waked him up early, by means of a wet sponge and the remark that he should come on deck for he was missing something. The vivacity and fluency of his comments encouraged me. There could be no doubt that his technique of expression was going to be quite adequate, when Passed by the National Board of Censors, to anything I had ever seen anywhere, up to and including Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa. But technique requires something to express, or it is empty sounding.

There was, for instance, the evening we turned into Phillips Arm and dropped our hook in three fathoms (real nautical stuff). On either hand the shores rose in steep, fir-covered slopes. A narrow, stony beach marked the high-tide limit with a line as straight as though drawn

by a ruler. Directly ahead at the end of the Arm seemed to be a little Y of grass meadow into which fed a wide notch valley climaxing in peaks white with snow and seamed with black ledges. Just abeam, nor'east by one half east (more genuine nautical stuff), the fir-clad ridge dipped into a wide gunsight notch at the skyline, and in that notch, like a huge front sight, was a pyramidal snow mountain. The arresting thing about this particular snow mountain was that it was pure, unbroken white. Not even a single boulder, the smallest outcrop, spoiled the purity; and as the base was concealed by the aforementioned fir ridge nearer at hand, the impression was of a Titan in shining armor standing guard. Black storm clouds made and dissipated behind it, throwing it out in contrast; and as the sun dropped, fugitive rose glows crept across its face and vanished.

We liked the look of Phillips Arm very much. Even Irwin paused for a moment in the arrangement of the deadly mechanism with which he was accustomed to murder that peaceful and harmless fish, the rock cod.

"By Jove, that's a fine mountain!" he cried. "Let me have that one!"

I examined it with appraising eyes. "It is not less than nine thousand feet high," I warned him, "and you must remember that the subtleties of light at this time of day make it very difficult."

But I was overpersuaded. Was there any mention of

that mountain in either of the articles Irwin wrote? There was not.

After the hook was down we lowered away the small boats and shoved off in exploration. We found that a river flowed into the Arm from the valley at its head. That river proved to be navigable to our small boats provided we pulled hard and took cunning advantage of the eddies and back waters. For it was a swift little river, in very much of a hurry, though it contained itself just inside of seemliness and never broke over into rapids and shoutings.

Its waters were clear and the bottom of bright gravel or darker ledge could often be seen dim and wavering; but more often one's eye seemed stopped, as when looking into thick green glass. Its banks grew their grasses and bushes down to the water's edge, without the usual beaches, mud flats, sand bars, piles of driftwood. This would indicate that its flow was constant and that it was not subject to floods.

We pulled strongly up against the current and shortly passed by the grass flats and entered the forest. The trees met overhead, so that we found ourselves in a high-vaulted green tunnel. The undergrowth pressed thickly to the shore, and leaned out, and occasionally dipped a branch that was alternately snatched and released in a manner strangely rhythmical. Sometimes moss-covered logs had fallen partly out into the river, and made swirls

and dark places and arrows in the current; and the river murmured a little impatiently, but never aloud, and went under and over and round, and hurried on. There was no breeze; there was no movement except of the waters; there were no sounds except for the hushed and hurried muttering of the river and the beautiful cathedral songs of the hermit thrushes. The air was cool, and all the shadows were green.

When we had rowed as far as we had time for, we drifted slowly back. Close to the bank, where the fallen trees had made pools and coves, where the undercut earth had left overhanging and shadowing sod, where the ghostlike, wavering bottom rose into sight half guessed, there lived lithe white-bodied trout. We drifted, occasionally dipping the oars to hold or direct ourselves, and cast warily. Only occasionally did we get a rise. This was not the kind of fishing where they grab at 'em every time you hit the water at all. It had nothing whatever in common with rock-cod murder. But when one of the dwellers in these cold green swirling places did rise, he came with a rush. Four or five times in the course of the ensuing fight he would leap into the air, shaking his white body savagely while the drops flew in an aura round him. By the time we had come again to the grass flat at the mouth we had eleven nice fish.

You will look in vain in Irwin's two articles for any mention of Phillips Arm, though Phillips Arm came in

his watch. Nor of the fishing in Phillips River. You will discover some triumphant mention of a defunct salmon snagged during a quarrel over magazine rights, and reams about that lowly and trustful creature, the rock cod, but not one word of the trout that flashed so eagerly from the smooth, smiling green depths.¹

"But," the fair-minded reader will object, "I seem to remember that Mr. Irwin had somewhat to say of the country. There stick in my memory pictures of Knight Inlet and some other places."

You are quite correct, O Fair-Minded Reader. He did. I will enumerate them to refresh your excellent memory. (a) Jervis Inlet; (b) Mt. Baker; (c) Buccaneer Bay; (d) The Inside Passage; (e) Indian Villages; (f) Knight Inlet, so cleverly recalled; (g) the waterfalls with the seals.

That is quite a goodly array, I'll admit. But note this: *these were all mine!* I looked these myself, and did a good professional job on them, if I do say so as shouldn't. I was prepared to bring back to the editor complete details and specifications couched in chaste but appropriate language. Not once would you have seen the expression "sparkling waters" (Irwin, page 23); you wouldn't have been shocked with the tale of "mud hens" when mud hens there could be none² (Irwin, page 24); no scenery would

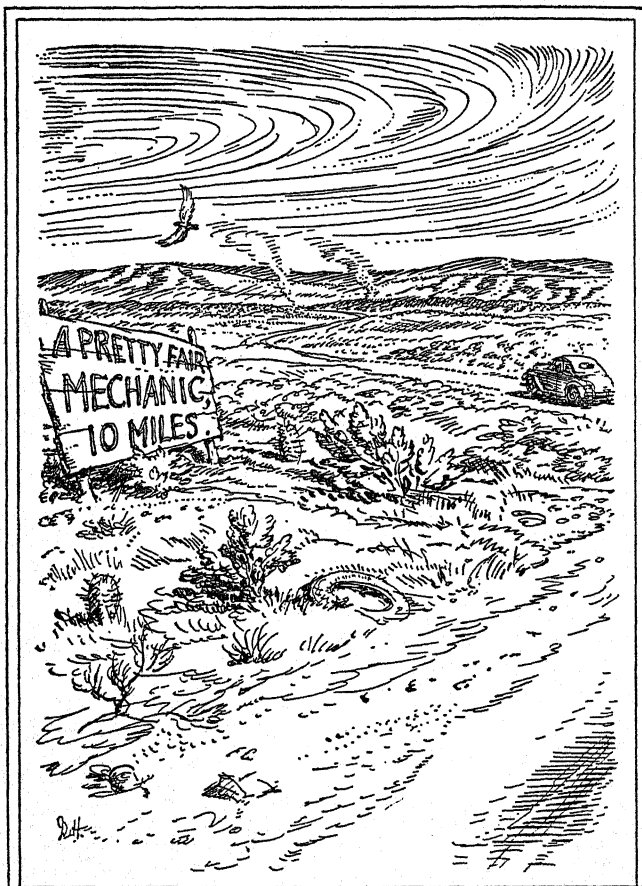
¹Author's note: It is extremely probable, however, that Mr. Irwin had no firsthand knowledge of these trout except at table. As has been pointed out, their taking required skill.

²Author's note: The poor goof meant *Podilymbus podiceps*.

have "burst on your sight" (Irwin, page 25), but why continue? You'd have had a nice, workmanlike union job of Scenery Looking that could have been used for a steamboat folder and wouldn't have wearied the British subscribers with humor and persiflage. And, on the other hand, had Irwin stuck to his job instead of worrying so over the incidental lengthening of his absurd rattlesnake sock by being dragged through the water, you'd have learned about Phillips Arm, Johnstone Straits, Texada Island, Bute Inlet, and the island of Buckeye Bones. I'll be jiggered if I'm going to tell you about them. It isn't my work.³

³Editor's note: When Mr. Irwin's articles were printed we had no knowledge of the jurisdictional agreements within the Scenery Lookers' Union. We merely thought that Irwin had been too much impressed by the northern scenery and had put too much description of it into the humorous articles we had ordered from him. Therefore, wherever his description was not funny we blue-penciled it and awaited Mr. White's expert observations. Now, of course, we are sorry that those scenic points are lost. But it is not the first time the innocent public has suffered from a jurisdictional dispute.

Minor Grouches



Minor Grouches

XI

I HAVE a number of pet minor grouches that people say tush-tush at. The tush-tushes are of various sorts. Some of them are kindly; others are quite the reverse. The kindly ones are intended to head me off before I can make a fool of myself or expose my ignorance or my *savoir-faire* or get in wrong with the right people. The scornful tush-tushes are merely implications that I have already done all those things. Nevertheless, the minor grouches remain. They are gaining pressure. They are in danger of becoming major grouches, in which case they may develop into inhibitions. I have read enough of Mr. Freud and Mr. Adler to have become very gun-shy of inhibitions. They bite your soul, and come out in your sleep, and do many other disagreeable things to you, unless you can get rid of them by telling someone all about them. The catch is that the fellow you tell them to calls himself a psychiatrist and charges you twenty-five dollars. I dislike paying anyone twenty-five dollars just because he labels himself with a funny name.

Take radio announcers. These men are *paid*. Latterly they seem to have given some attention to cultivation of

voice and tone. Why, then, in the name of just ordinary snake-breed consistence don't they learn the correct pronunciation of the five or six hundred words they are called upon to use each evening? That shouldn't be too difficult, even if they had to look them up one by one. Or why, if this is too great a strain, does not someone, *some* one, around the studio take this *paid* individual with the blandly cultivated accent to one side and tell him, so that at least he will not do it again? Or is a flagrantly ignorant mispronunciation another of those things your best friend won't tell you? Or is everybody in a studio—including the program's sponsors—as childishly unschooled as their salaried dunce with the ritzy cadences? If so, why don't they hire someone just to sit around and listen and correct, when necessary? It would not cost much; any bright tenth-grade student would do. To hitch such nescience to such pretentious modulation insults one with the incongruity of a diamond ring on a dirty finger. And I'm not kicking about minor programs or obscure announcers or unusual words. I'm talking about the big networks; and fellows who finish smugly, "This is Bully Witless speaking," and they with the verbal equipment of an I.Q. 62! "Menu" given as a cow lowing a strong accent on the last syllable. "Chauffeur," also a French word, to be sure, but it has been in our language for over forty years. Surely, in that time it ought to have outgrown the awkwardness of short pants.

Try it, boys. Forget its quaint and baffling spelling; that, we'll admit, is too much for you. But get your pencil and paper and take this down. Show. You know: Ziegfeld—Follies—chorines. Show. Got it? Now put down fir—no, make it fur: that goes with chorines. Fur: mink, marten, sable, tomcat, dog, skunk, rabbit. Now put those two together. Show-fur. Easy, isn't it? Feel dizzy? Head clear and steady? All right; and now never, never, *never* again say "Shaffure" in that bogus English accent. And *don't say you never did*. I heard you, only last night, on a nation-wide hookup. And furthermore, in blissful ignorance of your cultural nakedness you pranced right out in the open and with simpering *camaraderie* (that's another French word) disclosed your identity. Someday, if this thing becomes a Major instead of a Minor Grouch, I'm going to begin keeping notes, and I'm going to specify. I'm going to put down the list of the ordinary, common English words you fellows manhandle so outrageously, and I'm going to hitch your names to them, and I'm going to have the whole works printed on a transparency—if I can get one big enough—and I'm going around with it—probably on a motor truck—picketing the places where you "work" and the places of the people who let you announce for them. And then maybe you'll buy—or be presented with—a Webster's (adv.) or a Century (adv.) or a Funk & Wagnall's (adv.) dictionary. These books have words in them, arranged neatly in alphabetical order, and

they tell you not only what the words mean, but also how to say them.

This minor grouch, as the reader may gather, is not addressed so much to the self-satisfied boys who commit the crimes as to those who pay them to do this. And that leads me to a second minor grouch. I refer to advertising.

Now I, with every other reasonable human, am willing to pay to advertising a certain amount, in attention, for what pleasure I get out of a program. But unintelligent advertising gives me the fantods. And this should be noted: one of the leading symptoms of the fantods is an aggressive, not to say angry sales resistance. And it is *very* contagious. I've seen whole communities suffering from it. "I wouldn't smoke Marsupial Cigarettes on a bet; they talk your ear off." "Oh, I suppose the Smoked Mackerel program is all right; but who wants to live through all that hooey for a little music?" How many times have you heard that?

The principles of intelligent advertising are simple. It should be either (a) brief, and preferably under- rather than over-stated, or (b) intrinsically interesting in itself.

I've got to illustrate by the specific example. That constitutes free advertising. Say "free advertising" to the average editor, and he is thrown into the Shuddering Jitters. His copy reader is trained to query any specific mention. You can't say your cowboy wore a Stetson or carried a Colt's, even though he never wore or carried

anything else. It does not even do any good to point out that the article mentioned has not been made for a hundred years.

The value of understatement was well exemplified to us recently on a motor ride between Boulder Dam and Barstow. Lots of people advertise along that road. Fortunately, it's a big desert. The only signs I remember at all were three, obviously home painted. They read as follows:

"A pretty fair mechanic, 10 miles."

"A pretty good garage, 5 miles."

"I keep some auto parts."

Somehow, at need, I'd patronize that fellow with confidence.

The Standard Oil Company of California gives us, every Thursday evening, some of the finest music we hear on the radio. The cost of the program must be very high. They are in business for profit. Naturally they are entitled to a return for the advertising investment. Does their announcer burble on for minutes on high octanes and low visibilities and flash points and viscosities and boiling points and similar pseudo-technical bunk? He does not. He says, in effect, "This program is brought to you by the Standard Oil Company of California in the hope of enlisting your interest in its products." That is all. My heart warms to them. I buy their products. And if that is an ADV., make the most of it!

My example of the other type of intelligent advertising was that of the G. Washington coffee, in the Sherlock Holmes series. This advertising matter took up quite a proportion of the time. Nevertheless, it was effective. Why? Because it was interesting in itself. Sherlock came in from a drear and winter night. He was cold and wet. Dr. Watson made him a cup of G. Washington coffee, talking about it as he did so. You heard the plop of the gas flame lighting, the clink of the can being opened, the hiss of the water heating to a boil, its glug-glug as it filled the cups. And who could resist sharing the men's comfortable sigh of satisfaction at the first sip? Or Watson's simple triumph? It was a drama, varied at each performance. Good stuff!

Pot Shots at Screen Realism



Pot Shots at Screen Realism

XII

NOBODY more than I admires the meticulous, exact accuracies of the modern movies. In the good old days, Paul Revere could ride blithely past the garage, or Don Quixote could tilt against a reciprocating action windmill, and no one cared much. Probably that was the only piece of road and the only kind of windmill near location. To be sure there were always a few literal-minded specialists to write letters to the papers about it; but they were unimaginative cranks, and nobody bothered about them. When a director did take pains to get some little thing exactly right, he sure got a hand! I remember my own admiration of such a detail in an old silent called *The Last of the Mohicans*. The director had his people shoot off real flintlocks. I knew they were flintlocks because I could see the puff of white smoke near the breech. This was true realism, and appreciated, especially as he could have used any old black-powder muskets and got away with it. The custom was to work rather in symbols, without too close attention to accuracy. You tried for an effect.

But that is changed. The director works, not in sym-

bols, but in realisms. When You See It in the Movies, It's So! The Research Department is obviously and painstakingly on the job. It takes care not only of the big things, but the smallest of the incidental accessories. To prove it, the director shows you close-ups of wine jars and water clocks and hairpins and other curious small whatnots that have nothing to do with the action. They are background stuff, atmosphere—but they are right. So *that's* how they did it, sez you; and you are amazed at the Research Department.

The amazement is justified, even though the artistic values are lowered by the fact that your mind is unnecessarily taken from the story. The director will deny that word "unnecessarily." The true artist is thorough about the little as well as the big things; just as a true gentleman wears clean undies. I insist, however, that the true gent does not go around showing his undies to prove their cleanliness! In *Trader Horn* they went so far as to teach Edwina Booth a few genuine Swahili phrases to shout at the natives. Any gibberish would have done as well. I was all het up about that—until the picture ran into some of the animal sequences!

But I believe the movies. I've *got* to. I've checked up a whole lot of little gadgets on them, and they've been right. I have come to believe them even against my own experience. It is only reasonable to do so. Why should they spend time and money finding out about the wine

jars and water clocks and medieval hairpins which nobody would notice—without the closeups—and fail to verify the big things on which the plot turns? It isn't reasonable.

Take deep-sea navigation, for example. I have been somewhat of a sailor since boyhood. When I first saw the maneuver I am about to describe, I hooted. But subsequently, after I had seen it again and again in first-class pictures, I realized that I'd better come off my perch.

This is what happens—what *always* happens: We have a ship, sailing full and by, in a light breeze, over a smooth sea. The hero is First Mate. He is at the wheel. Of course ordinarily a ship's officer never takes the wheel; but that does not bother me. I am a loyal conceder, and I am willing to concede that probably the whole crew is down with the collywobbles. Enter the heroine looking for a clinch. Hero resists: he has his duty. Duty loses. For just one little moment the hero lets go. Instantly the wheel spins around several hundred times at about 1700 r.p.m. and eight hundred tons of sea water comes aboard.

I do not yet know why this is. I've tried it. I've let go the wheel, in pretty dusty weather, too, and walked across the deck, and spit over the rail, and walked back again, and I didn't even splatter the spray. I had no blonde. Perhaps that was the trouble.

Then there's revolver shooting. I used to think I was not so bad at that. Anyway, I wangled some medals out

of it. In my uneducated days I used to think that, when I wanted to hit any small object at any distance I'd better take my time, and stand sidewise to my target, and relax, and sight carefully at the length of my slightly bent right arm, and squeeze the trigger smoothly. In quicker, less accurate work, with the weapon about waist-high, the arm half extended, a good gunman could plug a *man-sized* target at about twenty yards or so. That was the method used in a quick fight at close ranges. And *only* then. Unless a man was right on top of his enemy he never dreamed of shooting from the hip. By much practice one could, at very close range, hit a five-gallon coal-oil tin that way.

Those were my ideas, built from both observation, experience, and conservatism—until the Research Department taught me better. *On the screen everybody shoots from the hip.* In all conditions; at any range; even when they have all the time in the world to take what we used to think was proper aim. And they never miss. It is nothing for them to knock riders from running horses at ranges that look to be a hundred yards or more. Dix picks his man, across the big tent, out of a moving crowd of people, with one nonchalant shot—from the hip. Later he fights a duel, cater-cornered across a street, from behind cover. In order to shoot from the hip he has to stand up and expose himself. So he does. I suppose it would not have been sporting otherwise: I do not know.

Zane Grey's characters are, however, the best; except occasionally a heavy, they *never* miss. Two of them in one picture were accustomed to change the ace of clubs to a five-spot by shooting holes in the card's corners. They did this at ninety paces, *from the hip!* I had always thought a forty-five's "error of dispersion" too great for this distance, without taking marksmanship into account at all. Indeed, such a feat performed with a rifle, from a dead rest, would have enlisted my admiration.

There are a lot of things I used to think I knew, but I'm "agettin' eddicated." In my simple Chinese fashion I always thought people died with their eyes open. They don't. They shut them decorously. That's how you know they have passed out. I've seen a few pictures wherein someone died with open eyes; but they must have been quickies without Research Departments.

Or is it barely possible that the technical experts and the directing heads do not mesh exactly? Is it possible that someone gets carried away by his sense of "drammer" and suffers a throwback to the good old days and sneaks in some stuff after the experts have stamped their O.K. and gone home? If so, that is tough on the experts who have to take the credit (?) for accuracy. But what's the diff? We gotta swell pitcher, didn't we?

No difference at all—provided the picture as a whole does not bluff at exact authenticity. *Tarzan* was frankly a fantasy; and a very lovely one. Anything was legiti-

mate. Nobody would have cared if the elephants had worn plug hats. Likewise nobody would have gone away with the idea that elephants habitually wear plug hats. But in *Bring 'Em Back Alive* we are expected to believe that what we see is not only possible, but typical. It is neither. Animals simply do not act that way. But from now on the inexpert public will think they do.

That is where the venerable accusation that the movies are immoral has some validity. Shucks! I do not care who is whose! But I do object to miseducating people as to things of which they know nothing. That is immoral, if you please! I am a movie fan. I go to every one I even hope will be good. I hate to see things done falsely when a flare of closeups of small accuracies insists that they are being done factually. When I see something I know about—like wild animals—done absurdly, I am in doubt about the things of which I am ignorant.

Everybody gives advice to the movies. Mine is this: Hire an observer, not only for the picture as a whole, but one for each technical phase of life included in the picture. He need not be an expensive "expert," merely someone who knows the things in his own experience. That goes for everything, even if it is only sewing on pants buttons. Pay attention to them. *And don't shoot behind their backs!*

Pesting for Pleasure



Pesting for Pleasure

XIII

IT IS VERY DIFFICULT for an ordinary non-gardening citizen, like myself, to enjoy a garden unless he can keep quite clear of gardeners, amateur and professional. They know too much, and they point things out.

A garden is a pleasant place in which to wander at random, amongst random impressions that float to the stroller, attracted by his spiritual needs of the moment. But to drag his attention to this or that individual botanical excrescence from the earth, and to demand his exclamatory admiration thereof, is much like concentrating a picture lover's attention on St. Peter's great toenail in Leonardo's Last Supper. Toenails are of interest only to a chiropodist or a painter, both specialists.

And any idea of actual participation is not worth much. Rarely will they permit it except under supervision, or with an obvious and disagreeable trepidation preconceived that you are going to do the wrong thing.

Naturally you do the wrong thing. You are terrified into that already by the realization of what you do not know, and of how much you ought to know before venturing. If you have not already sunk to this humility, you

need merely listen to any two of them together, or dip into their books and magazines.

It has seemed to you rather good fun to poke a hole in the ground with the ferrule of your cane or umbrella, to drop in a nasturtium seed, cover it with a thrust of your toe, and let Nature take its course.

Only ignorance can excuse such temerity. You have been wholly lacking in proper garden respect. In the first place, you should not have called the things nasturtiums, even in your innermost thoughts. They are *Tropaeolum majus* or *Tropaeolum minus*, and you've gone and done it without knowing which.

And what have you done about considering loams and nitrates and humus and hydroxyl ions and leguminous inoculation and mulching and other strange words of high ceremonial necessary to the proper ritual of your rash act?

Sure, you may get nasturtiums; so will you get trout with a worm. And anyhow they will be in the wrong place "for color harmony." Your only result will be—beside the nasturtiums, of which, you gather, you should be heartily ashamed—that you may be assigned a small and remote plot of ground "all of your own."

But no man cares to slink beneath either a falsely bright encouragement of what is obviously considered a dismally moronic effort, or the amused tolerance or-

dinarily reserved for children. No sensitive temperament will continue to garden in a gardener's garden.

You may, in your pathetic eagerness for participation, offer to trim. That seems a simple job. You snip tender things with shears, and tough things with clippers, and saw things with funny-shaped saws. It is rather fun, unless you have to pick up the things you have cut off. That is the catch. You can cut a thing off, but you can't put it back; and, unless you are a better man than I am, sooner or later you will merit the increpation of an otherwise fond and loving heart. In other words, trimming is dangerous.

Thus warned, what can one do, who finds pleasure in gardens, but is scared of the mighty—and seemingly necessary—erudition of gardeners?

The most obvious expedient is to sneak out by yourself, saying nuffin to nobody. This is the most effective, but uncertain. No one will believe, until he has tried, how difficult it is to find a garden without a gardener in it. They lurk, doing potty things behind hedges, and spring out upon you. They have no definite hours, so it does no good to arise to the freshness of early mornings. That is the time they do things with a hose. Another human being in the offing, no matter how much of a straw man before the impact of erudition, is irresistible to them. They cannot leave him alone in the comfort of his simplicity. Some inner compelling force drives them

forth to point out, and to utter strange and bewildering syllables such as *Phytolaccaceae*; or, for some obscure purpose, to introduce a medically pathological note.

Why should you be snatched from thrushes, and woven shadows, and patterns of color by such a loathly word as *scabiosa*?

A device that sometimes subdues to moderation is to learn one yourself, and to get it in first. On the principle of the backfire, or beating a man to the punch so that he is too dazed, or too cautious to lead. It is not particularly necessary to know yourself what it means, but it must sound formidable. Employing this method, I watch closely for the intake of a full breath that precedes the first broadside. Then I inquire nonchalantly:

"I suppose you haven't had much luck naturalizing your *dodocatherimenendrosoniavariacoocheyana*?"¹

This is phonetic, and probably phony. But it establishes me.

The third expedient is to find in the garden an interest of your own about which gardeners either know nothing, or on which you and they can start from scratch. Such as birds. All you need is a pair of field glasses. These you point toward any adjacent fowl when a gardener impends. Between times you can enjoy the garden in your own simple fashion. Nine times in ten your op-

¹One of the erudite, listening critically, ventures that perhaps this is the Mad Violet. Possibly; I always thought violets were too modest to get mad.

ponent will withdraw, seething with baffled technicalities.

Birds puzzle gardeners, as a rule. Some kinds scratch; some grab off fresh shoots as fast as they come up; some peck one hole in a perfectly good fruit and pass on to peck one hole in another; some are diabolically adept at finding and eating the most cunningly mulched seeds—if gardeners do mulch seeds; anyway, whatever it is that is done to start them off in life.

Gardeners are inclined to be darkly suspicious of birds. But, on the other hand, they do know, vaguely, that other birds, especially upside-down varieties, are reputed to eat three times their own weight daily of noxious doodlebugs, and they never take time off from their mulches and manures to learn which is which.

If you know, do not inform them. Birds have rights in gardens; probably they were there first. But you can lay in a stock of baffling long names of your own. Ornithology, as well as botany, has them. Accuracy is desirable, but not essential. You may safely toss off *phalacrocorax dilophus albociliatus*, if in an emergency that alone pops into your memory, disregarding the fact that the Farallone cormorant might conservatively be rated a rare and startling visitant to gardens.

But this is purely a protective measure. It has no creative content. I found a better. Possession of a Leica camera with fittings for a sort of photo-micrography,

combined with the dullness of the rainy season, suggested it to me.

Photography must then be done indoors. I amused myself taking pictures of seeds, and patterned grasses, and graceful leaf shapes, and the like—anything and everything plucked at random. I discovered that the most unlikely subjects would, when made large, develop an unexpected beauty of shape and pattern.

There was here something analogous to slow motion in the movies, which makes graceful all action. That is a difference in speed; this was a difference in size. Somebody, in a book, had called such things Art Forms in Nature, which we shortly contracted to Afins. That became their name. I did not know at all what they were. Simply they were beautiful.

One day, while in search of Afins, I happened upon a bluebottle fly and found that he, too, photographed well, and that enlarging him brought out his innermost character, which was dissipated. So I tried it on other bugs, at random, and was immensely tickled at some of the results, both esthetic and humorous.

I started with three or four times enlargement, but soon grew ambitious. By means of (a) extension tubes, (b) telephoto lens, and (c) "blowing them up" as big as the enlarger would permit, I managed as high as forty-five or fifty times.

That was getting into microscopic figures, but without

a microscope. It enabled me to find out what strange animated specks and pin-point dots looked like to their families. In this manner was I led into a field of research that is both fascinating and practical. My friend the aphid was immediately responsible.

At least that is what gardeners are always calling him in their interminable laments every time you stop to enjoy their roses. So bitter were they on this subject that they finally got me curious and I asked to have him pointed out. He failed to impress me. Indeed I found I already knew him under another name, satisfactory to me and to the tobacco-chewing vulgarian who told it to me.

When I informed my gardening friend confidently that this was a plant louse, she shuddered and repeated firmly the word aphid. I looked for it in one of the garden dictionaries with which her library is cluttered.

That fat volume did not contain the word. But it had a lot to say about aphid. This may have been a minor triumph for me; I do not know. What I do know is that the wise man never tries to correct gardeners. Let it pass. If they want to call him aphid instead of aphid, it is all right with me. It isn't my dictionary, it is hers; and it has a thickness of seventy millimeters as against seventy-four for Webster's Unabridged, which ought to mean something!

The naked eye showed my aphid about as meek and

humble and self-effacing a container of an inferiority complex as one could imagine, and about as interesting a subject for pictorial depiction as an egg. But look at him forty-five times enlarged! Saw you ever a more truculent pirate—a more single-minded and sinister ruffian? If physiognomy means anything he can have but one thought in his mind—"Bring on your damn roses!" says he.

Naturally I was greatly stimulated by this revelation, but its full significance in possibilities had not yet dawned upon me. Merely I was interested to see what a shift in size ratio would do with the humilities we arrogantly impose merely because we are bigger. Any one of these little creatures might be quite a fellow in his own magnitude.

Such proved to be the case. The world I entered was full of horrific dragons that only the purest-hearted Galahad could have faced with any confidence. Their function in this tiny-enormous world of theirs began to interest me.

Some of them, I found, belong to the tyrannosaurus class and have teeth and evil dispositions and can do damage; others, sometimes much more formidable in appearance, have hearts of gold and will not harm the gentlest microzoan. In other words, some are blights and some are beneficients.

Furthermore—and here is a point of the greatest im-

portance—the blights are choosy. One sort of doodlebug prefers roses and passes up apricots, and each undoubtedly looks upon the other with the superior scorn that the nut-and-raw-fruit crank bestows on his fellow human who adheres to the cook-'em-slow-and-mushy school of thought.

At this point the illumination of my Great Idea began to dawn. Most illuminations are said to burst, but this was different. Even yet I am groping in the twilight of exact detail. But the general principle is clear and can be briefly stated.

Determine accurately what doodlebug, or blight, belongs, as a pest, with each plant.

Determine the best conditions under which any given doodlebug, or blight, may best be artificially and in secrecy propagated.

Those are the two simple prerequisites, but I can easily see that to reduce them to a working basis is going to take a lot of time and research, too much for any one man. I urge all garden lovers who are not gardeners to co-operate. Only by co-operation can the required body of knowledge be collected.

I am making a start, but am not yet ready to report. Nor do I intend to use merely piecemeal knowledge. But when I swing into action anyone will be able to modify gardens nearer to the heart's desire. He can have such things as nasturtiums, and red geraniums, and hollyhocks,

and ice plant, and daisies, which for some reason are very difficult to get in proper preponderance.

They have every desirable characteristic. You plant them and they grow, and you don't have to mulch and spray and soil test and cultivate and train and trim and fumigate and sit up nights with them. Their tastes are healthy and natural. They wouldn't know carbon disulphide from hydrocyanic acid, or paradichlorobenzene from rock phosphates; and would not know what to do with any of those things if you gave them to them.

They make nice, gay, cheerful, homey, vulgar gardens of honest flowers, strangers to coddling, capable of survival without fuss, of fighting it out with each other, and the best man wins!

And when, from our secret breeding grounds, we are able surreptitiously, at night, to loose our selected and selective pests to meet the present emergency, then at last we shall be able to control the blight of botanical erudition that at present makes of our gardens either outdoor laboratories for the cultivation of the refractory, or formulated arrangements in strict accord with Procrustean esthetics.

Then we shall be willing, nay, eager, to have things pointed out. We shall need the information. Our garden walks will gain the significance of the actively constructive.

"This," the innocently proud gardener will designate

the usual anaemic spear of green, "is a *basilicalunaria*. It grows luxuriantly into an herbaceous papilionaceous spinney."

That is the way they talk. You may have to learn enough of the lingo for your purpose. Or you can ask flatly for the common name, provided you are the sort of person who drinks from his finger bowl.

Thenceforward your procedure is routine. *Basilicalunaria*—hm! What we need is *brachyzbinius saleatus*. He eats *basilicalunarias* like ice cream. But he is also susceptible to arsenic trioxide. Therefore, it will be wise to investigate the tool house, and to substitute talcum powder, if they have any arsenic trioxide on hand. Then from the secret central breeding station you requisition a loving couple or so of this useful beetle, and in due time—and at night—introduce their grandchildren to their prey.

Such is the ultimate ideal. It will require a lifetime of intensive research to get it exact. At the moment we must be content with less than perfection. Sometimes we may have to fall back on a sort of shotgun treatment—enlist a pest or blight who will eat most anything. Do not fear for your own protégés; one of the endearing characteristics about bronco flowers is their immunity.

This savors of frightfulness; we must be fair, and admit that. And of the surreptitious, which is abhorrent to our open natures. But such things have ever been, must ever

be, the weapons of the oppressed. The tyranny of gardeners is of long standing. Only the poets have dared to give it voice, and they only under the most ingenious disguises, like Bacon writing Shakespeare.

"A garden is a lovesome thing. God, wot a spot!"

Only he got by with it by a little different punctuation.

This is fundamentally a war against knowledge, and we must all do our bit, using the tyrants' weapons against themselves. And even in the midst of the struggle we should be able to discover by-products of satisfaction, and find pleasure in our pesting.

The Highway



The Highway

XIV

NO. I. KNIGHT ERRANT

OUR STATE HIGHWAY POLICE, along with filling-station attendants, have become in the modern development of our civilization the Guardians of the Sacred Flame. It was flickering pretty low until they took over. We were coming to look upon those few, who in private life still practiced the ancient rites of its attendance, as vestigial remains, old foggyish, "quaint," and necessarily futile. They were growing old and dying out. The public life of diplomacy, to whose especial care tradition had always assigned it, had abandoned it with bewildering suddenness. And then, almost at the point of extinction, and apparently overnight, it passed into the care of competent and cherishing hands. Once more it shines brightly and warmly for the gentleness of our hearts and lives.

Courtesy, that is what I am talking about—the outward manifestation, demonstration, of what the casual human relationship should be. A courtesy so complete, so understanding, so personal, so kindly, that the purchase of ten gallons of gasoline bestows a bonus of delightful social contact, and it is—almost—a pleasure to be arrested!

This is not merely a matter of taught technique,

though, undoubtedly, it started that way. Some higher-up with vision issued orders and gave instruction. But the orders came to receptivity, and the instruction fell upon eagerly fertile soil. Any clerk in any well-conducted store bends his back in sycophantic and external conformity with the mere letter of the law. But the spirit lacks. Here is the spirit. One cannot rid oneself of the idea somehow that our Knight of the Road does not, at the end of the day, lay aside with his harness the subtler habiliments of that spirit. At least one is left incapable of visualizing such divestment. The activity of literalism cannot penetrate the greater actuality of reality. We cannot, somehow, hear his shirt-sleeved request to his chatelaine—"Say, Maggie, when do we eat?"—in those words. What dim, unformed visions, what faint, far echoes may come to us of his private life are softened by romance.

No, not foolish romance—the romance of imagination. It is a dull soul that is incapable of so much. See him on his flashing steed, leaning against the curve of speed, cap-a-pie in the habiliments of his calling, leathered and goggled, trim and compact, shining in the sun—is he not the modern incarnation of the Knight Errant riding the realm, alert for his dragons to slay, his caitiffs to subdue, his wrongs to right, his damsels in distress to succor?

This is, as I say, no matter of mere externals. Step on it and see. You will be surprised, especially if you are a

visitor from another state, or one whose experience in such things has been confined to city limits, wherein function only those blue-clad villeins known as City Police, whose unimaginative but belligerent gambit opens, "Say, what's the big idea?" You draw resignedly to the roadside and press down the brakes. The motorcycle curves across your bow and also comes to a stop. Its rider dismounts, kicks down its gadget that leaves it poised at the rakish angle of its quiescence. Without haste, he saunters back and leans his elbow on your window. He smiles.

"Good morning," says he. He surveys your car thoughtfully. "These Buicks can get up quite a bit of speed, can't they? Like the car? You were doing seventy, you know," he supplements your stammering assent.

"Was I? I didn't notice—I was thinking of something else." "There wasn't another car on the road, and I thought—" "I'm late for a very important appointment and—" "I just got word my wife is taken sick and—" "I know, but my brother-in-law is Senator Whoosis and—" "Now, officer, I was going just forty-two. I know, because I—" "I'm sorry."

Check one of the above replies, and be graded as to your C.Q. (Common-Sense Quotient). As far as the officer goes, it will not matter which; he has heard them all, and many more. Whichever you select, he will smile again with sympathy.

"A man's foot does get heavy sometimes," he admits. "Human nature, I guess. But you see we have to think of the general public——"

You chat for a time. You gradually pluck up courage. This is a nice fellow. Obviously he appreciates that you are an exceptional driver. You and he are at one, you find, in your opinion of the ordinary mill-run driver, and that he must be held strictly to account.

"Well, I must be shoving along," says he at last.

It has been a pleasant episode. You glow warmly within. And then—he hands you a tag! And you realize, with some sadness and considerable chagrin, that he had never entertained the remotest intention of *not* handing you a tag, and that if you had had any hopes to the contrary, they were false hopes and wholly unjustified; and for one resentful moment you may feel that your better nature has been played upon somehow. But I doubt if that long persists. There was, after all, nothing phony about the interview. The cordiality was genuine. He enjoyed the chat just as much as did you—up to the point of that tag's appearance.

He saunters back to his motorcycle, kicks up the gadget, mounts the saddle. His engine roars. He looks back, smiles, and waves his hand. He is away, his harness flashing in the sun. Yes, that's what they used to call it—harness. "And his harness was all to-brast, and the Green Knight of the Green Lawns was he y-clept." You stare

after his diminishment in the distance of the open road. You look down, faintly bewildered, at the tag. Pleasant break in a dull morning. He's a nice fellow. He thinks you're a nice fellow. What's a tag between friends? Harsh memory rasps in your mind's ear: "Say, who do yeh think you are! Where's the fire?"

"Well, by gum!" say you, the Outlander. "I've heard of the wonders of California!"

NO. II. "SIX KILLED IN BAYSHORE CRASH!"

There is nothing funny about this. The papers tell me that last year thirty-seven thousand of us were killed and about a million more of us were injured in a war in which we all took part. This, on a per-annum basis, compares about equally with our casualties in World War I. But we haven't a chance for a bonus or a pension or even hospitalization.

Furthermore, this war has been going on for years; it is getting worse, and it is remediable.

Then why don't we remedy it? We do try, after our large, amorphous and vague fashion. That is to say, we are suitably horrified in print, and we meet and pass resolutions, and we appoint commissions and suggest new laws, and through our legislatures we pass laws—though we do not need them, for the laws we already have are quite adequate. The real trouble is that we do not obey them.

Why not? It is silly to say we are naturally a law-defying people. We are not. We are a law-careless people, to be sure, but that is because we are made so. How? Not so much by non-enforcement as by capricious enforcement or inadequate enforcement, for we *are* by nature a gambling people. There is something about taking a chance that appeals to us irresistibly. I am not now talking of the taking of driving chances by the reckless, damfool few. I am talking of the habit of taking a chance of "getting by" in general.

Like most habits, that is a thing that is built up slowly in the public subconscious mind from trivial and apparently harmless beginnings. Let us take a simple example of the most harmless sort we can find, one that can have no evident relation to accidents. To venture out on the highway in April 1937 with a 1936 license plate would not seem to endanger the public safety. Yet just that is one of those harmless small beginnings. Why? Let us see.

Along in December our attention began repeatedly to be called to the fact that by the first of February we must have new plates, that after that day we should have to pay double, and that there would this year be no extension. Nevertheless, on the first of February an extension was announced. Why, in the face of so positive a statement, this grace should be accorded is obscure. Six weeks would seem to be ample time to attend to so simple a matter. At the end of the extension, another was ac-

corded. That made two where none was to grow before! Then, apparently, the good nature ran out. They got hard-boiled. It was announced, in categorical terms, that after a certain date—I think it was the first of March—the highway police would be instructed to pick up and cite all carriers of last-year's licenses. That should be an easy matter, like shooting mud hens. Pretty easy hunting; no extra work. Just cruise along as usual and spot the yellow plates—you can see them a mile away. No exceptions. Grr! See the teeth showing.

Did the frightened procrastinators hasten at last to the inevitable? Nineteen days later, on the eighteen miles of the Bayshore Highway between Burlingame and San Francisco, I counted fifty-nine last-year's licenses. A very few of them were attached to the "poor workman's" rattletrap, offered as an excuse for leniency. The majority were on good-looking, well-to-do cars; seven were on trucks belonging to big corporations; three were on public busses; and one was on a vehicle connected with a Federal Department! I also passed two motorcycle officers trundling along with apparently nothing pressing on their minds, and one by the roadside idly watching the traffic go by. All three seemed to be color blind to yellow.

What's it to you? Nothing much, except this: that I'll bet that deep down inside of nine out of ten of the virtuous, whether consciously expressed to himself or not,

was the half-resentful thought: "Heck! if I tried that, I'd get jugged in the first half mile!" By the virtuous, I mean the fellow who did his license-shopping early. And with this thought a confused sort of subconscious sardonic ferment—Wolf! Wolf!—positively the last deadline—without exception—strict orders issued—oh yeah! He doesn't want to "get away with it" himself—not at this moment. But deep down the germ of a generalization that, in other circumstances, will sprout. Get away with it? Sure! Take a chance!

Pretty small potatoes? In itself, yes. As an illustration, admirable; for it contains the *principle* of why we go on killing so many of ourselves in such a stupid fashion. *We are not made to believe what we are told.* We are small boys at heart. It tickles us to take a dare. It is amusing to "get away with it," no matter what it is. Obviously, a certain number of us can "get away with it"—look at all the yellow license plates.

You can't kill a man merely by sporting a yellow license plate, but the trouble is, we react to that subconscious feeling in other things. Not deliberately very often: instinctively, because we have been headed that way.

Our traffic regulations have one end in view, and that is safe travel on the highways. With a few exceptions they are sensible. Their observance should be a matter of sportsmanship rather than compulsion. The great ma-

majority are sportsmen, as you can prove to yourself at any unattended traffic signal anywhere. You'll see a dozen cars waiting patiently behind the red light—and not a car in sight on the crossroad! But there's always the minority—the fellows who dash across after the bell has rung! These are the ones who do not believe, who have not been *made* to believe what they are told, and who have been shown by examples of the sort we have been considering that there's a good sporting chance of getting away with it.

My point is this: It is too late to teach them small first principles when they have landed themselves—and someone else—in the hospital or the morgue. The profound boys are always telling us that it is a matter of public education. All right, then educate; but begin as education should begin, at the beginning! It is not a matter of learning specific things, but of forming a *habit* of mind. A habit is gained by an invariable repetition. Ask any golf instructor. Ask any dog trainer. And by beginning on simple little things. Then, when big things come along, they more or less take care of themselves.

I am not chump enough to advocate rigid enforcement of the letter of every law. That has been tried, both in life and in fiction. Unfortunately, laws and regulations are the product of legislators. Likewise, it is fundamentally true that circumstances alter cases. An elementary example is speed limit. To arrest every man who exceeds

fifteen miles in certain districts, or even the forty-five-mile legal limit of the open road, would be silly. Enforcement must have a certain elasticity, simply because we cannot seem to get that necessary elasticity into the laws. That is tacitly understood, and does no harm as long as the understanding remains tacit. It's the four-flushing that does the damage—when they threaten openly, and then don't! It is literally dangerous, for just that is one very important element, indirectly but nonetheless surely, responsible for our highway perils. Quit grandstanding on the spectacular, O powers that be! We don't ask you to enforce any one particular thing, but if you say you are going to, why, then, *do it!*

As an old-time Westerner I am saddened by this. There was my friend whom I called Billy Knapp and of whom I wrote in the article "Adventure." He had come to seventy years, unscathed by vicissitude. After I began to know something of his history, I asked him how come.

"Well," said he, "I allus made it a rule never to touch my gun unless I meant to shoot."

It's a good, sound Western policy, from which, I fear, we are falling away. A new sissy spirit of boldly saying boo and running like hell is softening our efficiency, not only on the highway, but in other departments of life, with which we are not now concerned. It is actually getting so that when the official who says boo does *not*

run like hell, we are astonished and aggrieved! The license-plate boo is not the only boo, not by a long shot. There are much more serious boos, and I am going to touch on them in due time—boos that are more intimately responsible for that growing tendency not to believe what we are told, which results, as end product, in our stupefying casualty lists.

I do not know, and cannot guess, just where originates this settled policy of bluff. But to this faith do I cling: it is somewhere higher up. I cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, ascribe this one rotten spot of negligent inefficiency to the shining-panoplied Knights of the Road. I believe they do as they are told, and that, if their orders squared with the dire threats made to the public, those orders would be carried out. I cannot think otherwise. I have too often seen them in action, admired not only their courtesy—of which we have spoken—but their competence in emergency, and, above all, the wisdom and tolerance of their judgment in those cases to which is appropriate a certain latitude.

One sunny afternoon I was driving down a straight, fair stretch of road. No other vehicle was in sight, except a motor cop, whom I could see in my mirror a quarter of a mile behind. My mind was conscious of rectitude. I knew that a reasonable driver was never disturbed for going fifty, in such circumstances; nevertheless, I was holding that super-exact forty-five appropriate to the

sight of a cop in a rear-view mirror. Thus for a while we proceeded. At last evidently he tired of such poor hunting, or had satisfied his mind. I saw him pick up speed to pass me. And then, to my astonishment—and dismay—as he came abreast, his siren sounded, and his steed made across my bows the well-known wide curve of arrogant—and justified—confidence that I would pull up.

I did so. My conscience was like a baby's, but what good did that do? I experienced the normal sinking of the heart as he went leisurely through the usual ritual of propping up the motorcycle and sauntering back. Nor did his first words reassure me.

"Are you in any hurry?" he asked.

I assured him that I was not only in no hurry, but that I was not hurrying. And rather despairingly I asked him what in blazes I'd done now?

"Not a thing," said he. "It isn't that, but I recognized you, and I thought I'd tell you that I've read that Andy Burnett stuff in the *Saturday Evening Post* and——"

Even a mind conscious of rectitude is capable of relief. I have a horrid fear that until the daze passed I may have babbled, even have been effusive. I remember offering cigarettes which he gravely refused. He remained, his elbow on the window ledge of my car, in an aloof and Olympian tolerance. Bless you, he knew and understood those first panicky flurries when the harpoon bit. He'd

seen them aplenty, and, like a good fisherman, he had learned to await their subsidence before reeling in. That he did not intend to reel me in, and that, indeed, I was sounding at the mere flash of the iron, made no difference. He did not hold it against me.

After which, for ten minutes, we talked, man to man, and to my questions he replied with a philosophy and phraseology that surprised me. I learned that, in his view, he was not a predator cruising about in search of whom he might devour. He was quite simply out taking care of the children—not very bright children—irresponsible, more heedless than headstrong, unthinking rather than malicious. And so very unexpected!

“Sometimes I get to kidding myself that I’ve got to the bottom of the bag,” said he sadly; “that there isn’t one damfool trick I haven’t seen done that a man can do with a car. And then——”

He told me horrors, one after the other, quietly, dispassionately, as one who enumerates the items of a catalogue, things he had seen. Unbelievable tragedies of smashing and killing and maiming that pounced unheralded on what would have been only minor stupidities, if things had not happened just so. Then he went on with a longer catalogue of exactly similar minor stupidities he had seen that had escaped disaster, had turned out all right.

“There’s no difference,” said he, “no real difference.

Just good luck. But they get mad when I hold them up."

Some of the stupidities seemed to me submoronic. I warmed to indignation, even at second-hand. There ought, I gave my opinion, to be some way, some form of test, of examination, to keep off the road people below a certain grade of intelligence.

He shook his head.

"I used to think that—when I was green," said he. "But I found it isn't a matter of what you call intelligence. Not of the man, anyway. You'd have to give your examination to the combination; and the only way you could do that is on the road. That's what I'm trying to do—every day."

"The combination?" I echoed, at a loss.

He hesitated, and a trace of color mounted his cheek. He looked at me sideways.

"Well," he decided, "I don't know as I can say it very clearly—like you might. But here's how it is." He hesitated again. "It isn't a matter of a man's being dumb," said he, "but of being different. Now you take a high-grade citizen, a banker, or a lawyer, or the head of a big business. He's got a good head on him, and you know he's going to act with common sense and good judgment any place you want to put him. You feel that you can *rely* on him, because he's old enough and intelligent enough and cool enough. You can sort of *predict* him. Get what I mean?"

"Certainly," I said; "but when you put him in a powerful car he gets silly. Is that it?"

"Not exactly," he groped. "Here you got two things! a car and a man. You know 'em well, both of 'em, and you know what each of them can do—will do. Well, stick 'em together, and you haven't just got that man and that car. You've made something entirely different, like as if you had a new sort of critter entirely. So that you've got a new entity (yes, he used that word) made up of the two. Sounds foolish," he concluded lamely.

"Not at all," said I. "Like a Trinidad Swizzle. It's a drink. Most mixed drinks are mechanical mixtures of their component liquors; the swizzle is a chemical mixture different from its ingredients."

"Yes," he agreed, "and the trouble is, you can't tell a thing about how this new entity is going to act, just because you know how that man would act when he isn't a part of it." He thrust his cap back, and wiped his forehead, and grinned a little sheepishly. "Well, anyway," his tone became exaggeratedly gruff and matter of fact, "you got to keep an eye on the whole kit and caboodle, no matter who they are, till you get 'em settled in your own mind—what kind of a critter the combination makes, I mean. I don't care who it is."

He grinned reminiscently. "You'd be surprised," said he. "Why, one fellow on my beat was safest when he was drunk. Then he'd go into low gear and hug the side

of the road. I followed him all the way from the city just to see. Low gear all the way—twenty miles! I gave up bothering about him. A fellow gets to know a good many of the regulars and how good they are. And he can pretty well size up the strangers. Just follow along," he answered my look of inquiry, "and size up his system.

"Why," he warmed up again, "most of the time I'm not just riding along looking for someone to do some little thing I can tag him for. I'm sizing up how he acts—what sort of places he speeds up, if he does; how he passes other cars and where; whether he flicks a glance both ways at crossroads or barges along just because he's got the right of way; whether he's the kind that rides his brakes—oh, a dozen little things like that. I can tell in half a mile, even when there's no other traffic with him on the road. Then I know whether I got to watch him or not. That's what really counts. Easy enough to hand out tags, if that's all you're after, but that isn't taking care of your people."

"Tell me," I asked, "do all the rest of you fellows look at it that way?"

He looked at me with surprise. "Why, of course, said he.

I was encouraged to an impertinence.

"I want to ask you this," I ventured. "With the law as it is, why don't you go after those fellows with only one headlight or last-year's licenses, or——"

He withdrew his elbow from the window.

"Hope I ain't kept you too long," said he, "but go on, write some more of that Andy Burnett stuff——"

"Sorry," I called after him.

"That's all right," said he, but he did not look back.

NO. III. WILD WEST

"Walter Jones. Intoxicated. Flourishing loaded revolver, downtown streets, at crowded hour. Charge: disturbing the peace. Suspended sentence."

"Jasper Smith. Intoxicated. Shooting high-power rifle on Market Street to hazard of shopping crowds. Nobody hurt. Twenty-five dollars fine."

"Charles Robinson. Intoxicated. Celebrating wife's birthday by firing machine gun. Accidentally hit and killed Ralph Cook, bystander. Charge: negligent homicide. Released two hundred and fifty dollars bail."

The above three typical items I culled from many nearly similar ones in the daily prints. They are interesting as gauging our lighthearted attitude in the face of danger. We are indeed a brave people. A suspended sentence; a twenty-five dollar fine; a release on bail so low that no one would give a second's thought to its forfeiture. We can feel a little sorry for Robinson: he had bad luck. Smith had good luck, and Jones even better, in that he got headed off before he arrived at the shooting stage. Otherwise, there was no real difference

between the three cases. As for Ralph Cook, he did not count; he was just one of us, and we are a brave people. And a tenderhearted. At least that is what the judges who determined the penalty, and the lack of penalty, and the chicken-feed bail had to say about it when interviewed.

It ought, some sissy suggested to them, to be a felony, or at least a mandatory jail offense, to go about thronged streets while drunk, with a cocked and loaded weapon. You've got to discourage such antics by some penalty that will give men pause, at least.

It certainly ought, persisted the sissy, to be better than a misdemeanor to go sprinkling bullets promiscuously through a crowd, and there are any amount of wealthy damfools to whom twenty-five dollars is a small price to pay for a little fun.

Well, anyway, concluded the effete one, do you really think that, if Robinson feels that he is actually going to be held responsible for a man's death, he is going to hang around just to get back two hundred and fifty dollars?

The judiciary is patient. It replies. "If," say the judges, "we charge felony, the jury simply will not convict."

"Aren't you even going to take away their guns?" cries our sissy in despair.

Well, that might be considered. It depends. We've taken away a good many guns. On the other hand, a good many more we leave in possession of their owners.

No use asking why the procedure is not invariable. You wouldn't understand. A man has a right to a gun: the Constitution says so. Public sentiment, practical expediency, considerations of policy—the inquiry is lost in a mist of generalizations into which responsibility recedes and fades like the Cheshire Cat.

Silly sort of fable? Not at all: an accurate statement of documented fact.

Past history? The old Wild West? Good old days of lighthearted cowboy forays to shoot up the town? Not a bit. As a matter of fact, the date of the above episodes is this year.

Exceptional, then? By no means. To be sure a certain number of these drunken menaces to public safety have run against judges hard-boiled enough to do more than slap them on the wrist; but many more have got off with a tut-tut.

No, my account is straight from the records. In two respects only have I altered fact. The names are fictitious. The weapon employed was neither a revolver, a high-powered rifle, nor a machine gun. It was, however, just as deadly, especially in the hands of an irresponsible drunk. And the principle involved is exactly the same.

What difference there should be, either in public opinion or legal consequence, between firearms and motor-cars, is obscure. Nevertheless, it exists. We no longer tolerate shooting up the town, but we still look with

lenient eye on bibacious burning of the highways. The fellow who lets fly a three-hundred-grain bit of metal into general circumambience is yanked into quarantine so fast that his ears flop, but the genial souse who launches a two-ton projectile at random on the narrow lane of thoroughfare—"Ain't he cute, he's only six!"

Now this is an utterly senseless situation. There are only a few things against which a good driver is really helpless. Mechanical defects of a certain type one cannot foresee; no amount of skill and care will forestall accident from such a thing as a broken steering gear, for example. But such defects are very, very rare. Another unavoidable—not nearly rare enough—is the drunken driver in another car. He is absolutely unpredictable. No policy of avoidance, no supercaution of yielding, brings safety. His head-on collisions are as likely to take place in the fourth lane on an empty road as in the thickest traffic. I should really like to know how his befuddlement sees the situation: whether it is his estimate of speed and space that is distorted, or whether his is an obsession of reckless belligerence to push in, or if his trouble is simply widening of a gap between conception and execution. It is almost worth getting drunk to find out, only I should want a co-pilot!

The majority of our fatal crashes occur at the week ends. It is customary to attribute this to the fact that everybody turns out for Sunday and so the roads are

crowded. Sunday traffic on our Bayshore is sometimes very heavy, to be sure, but it is rarely anywhere near as heavy as on each and every weekday between about half-past four and six, when businessmen and office workers go home. During that time the highway really *is* crowded, just about as full as it will hold. If accidents were in ratio to the number of cars on the road, our 'weekday' toll should be proportionately the greater. Only it isn't. On the contrary, weekday smashes in these crowded hours are almost nil. Accidents are more numerous at night and in the early morning when the roads are almost deserted.

Of course these weekday workers are doing it every afternoon, whereas a lot of the Sunday drivers get out only once a week. The skill of practice does help to a certain extent, but rather in the matter of crumpled fenders than major crashes. No, the real difference is this: the weekday crowds are merely going home, the Sunday crowds are out for a good time, and part of the good time with many is the flask, the roadhouse, or the picnic jug of wine beneath the bough.

For, and here is the point, there is a terrifyingly large number of people who need not be drunk to be dangerous. Not properly drunk, according to present definitions of that happy state. Waiving for the moment leniency of enforcement, you must still prove the culprit drunk. "No sir," testified the loyal valet of his master, "he was not

drunk, not what you'd really call drunk. He could move one foot." The standard is shifting, and the proof is difficult. Not to mention that a good smashup has a wonderfully sobering effect. It is easier to get a conviction on a lesser charge.

Someday we are going to adopt a new system. Then the survivors of us will decide it unnecessary to bother with the word "drunk" at all. If a man is in a fatal accident, and he has been drinking, it will be presumed that he is at fault and responsible. The burden of proof will be on him. No elaborate tests: just smell his breath.

No, I know we won't consider it now. I can hear the howl go up. Victimize a man simply because he has taken one drink! Do you mean to say you'd apply such a law to the fellow who'd merely taken wine with dinner? Or a cocktail or two? That sort of thing's been tried in the "noble experiment," and look what happened! Suppose I'm in an absolutely unavoidable accident, where's the justice in making me responsible just because I have a trace of liquor on my breath? Think of the innocent victims there'd be of such a law! Think of . . .

All right! All right! I know it would be an outrage. But I remember that a man is not permitted to take a drink and drive a locomotive, which is confined to its rails! Or fly a plane, which has a whole lot of three-dimensioned space in which to cavort. It occurs to me that no one actually *has* to take a drink and drive a car:

he has a choice of which he prefers to do, which gives him the most pleasure. And if he elects to drink, he can, without too much difficulty, arrange to be driven. Or, if he is so certain of himself, he can do both; only he will do it with his eyes open to the possibility of bad luck, just as he crosses Market Street with the knowledge that he is subjecting himself to the ordinary hazards of life. Some "innocent" victim in spite of all? Sure! But my mind *will* turn to the last year's innocent victims of the present setup, more than a million of them, or a very large percentage thereof.

But I realize that we are not yet educated to so radical a point of view by sufficient slaughter. Possibly we need a casualty list of three million. Well, we're working toward it!

When I was a kid I used to face my honored parents, after some catastrophe of my own induction, with what seemed to me the sufficiently exonerating statement, "I didn't mean to," only to be crushed by the counter inquiry, "Did you mean *not* to?" We have not yet learned that difference. In the meantime let us join piously in the good old hymn:

*We go by with yells and whoops,
We kill your chickens in your coops,
We chase your children off your stoops,
We are the Sunday Drivers!*

NO. IV. GET A HORSE!

I am warned that to reminisce is a sign of age. That depends on what you are reminiscing about. Now take this subject of which we have been writing, the highway. Who is qualified to reminisce about that? Certainly not you youngsters. As far back as you can remember you have driven a perfected car over graded hard-surfaced roads. If you were to be called upon for eyewitness history, the best you could do would be to moon over the good old days before the Santa Maria Cut-off, when you had to go around by Orcutt, or that romantic era when it was as much as thirty miles between barbecues. As for adventure, it exists no longer in a state of nature, but must be sought by means of booze, speed, and similar artificialities.

In the blithe spring of 1905 Rob Wagner and myself started out bright and early to motor from Santa Barbara to Los Angeles. Our vehicle was optimistically rated at eight horsepower. It possessed no windshield and no top. We missed neither of these, for we were protected against the elements—if any—by leather coats, enormous goggles, and visored caps—also of leather—whose shape for some reason or other had been fashioned in quaint suggestion of the sea. Our potential rate of speed we were never able to determine, for the simple reason that we never happened on a long enough piece of smooth sur-

face to open her up. Time en route had not yet assumed any importance. Getting there at all was sufficient of a triumph. It was to that feat we oriented our ambition, challenging with spirit Sara Redington's biting—and all too accurate—aphorism:

"The automobile gets there faster, but the horse, oftener."

It was not until two years later that some few of our slowly growing group began to brag of road records. Thus Alley asserted that between King City and Salinas he had averaged twenty-one miles an hour. We listened to him, saying nothing at the moment; but afterwards we privately agreed that Alley was a peculiarly picturesque liar. And there was Huron Rock making the one-hundred sixty-five miles between Santa Barbara to Paso Robles in one day! We could not doubt Huron, but we did deprecate him as a speed demon.

Nowadays few know anything about the mechanism of their cars. They can make them go, and stop them, but of the details of what is under the hood they are ignorant. There is no real reason why they should be otherwise. Everything is permanently and reliably arranged for them. All they have to learn is a single word: "Fillerup." The sissies!

It was different then. Even Alley never dared brag that he had made a hundred miles without a roadside stop for tinkering. Any motorist, as a matter of course, knew all

about internal-combustion engines. He had to. I do not mean because of breakdown, but because of necessary normal adjustments that are nowadays made once and for all and sealed up so you *can't* tinker with them. There were the coils, one for each cylinder, and fine micrometer screws to fiddle with in order to get just the right pitch to their buzzes (if you hadn't a musical ear you were out of luck), and a wafer file to smooth the points when they pitted and stuck, and you'd better file 'em square!

There was the carburetor that took adjusting every time it turned hot or cold or wet or dry, or you filled up with a different batch of gasoline. You had not merely one screw to turn but three—for idling, for low speeds, for high speeds—and when you got one right the other two were wrong. And if you went up in the mountains to any elevation, you had to give her more air, which increased the possible permutations and combinations into the higher mathematics.

Furthermore, each breed of car had its specialties. In our own case there was the matter of piston-rod bearings. At indeterminate and rather frequent intervals a sledgehammer knock warned us to get busy. Then we took off the top of the crankcase, lifted out a set of timing gears, and tightened the bearing by removing one of fifty or more shims of metal that the manufacturer had inserted for that purpose. Then we replaced the timing gears.

The trick was to stand on your head and mesh those gears at exactly the right tooth. If you meshed them even one tooth off—in either direction—you sputtered or back-fired or bucked, and just didn't go! There were a lot more, but there is no sense in cataloguing them. As requirements, they are as extinct as the dodo. But these were the usual things, part of the motorist's equipment of knowledge. And he used them, believe me, he used them!

Now at that time both Rob and I were of these things almost wholly ignorant. The car was new. We had learned to crank it without being kicked into the middle of the Ming Dynasty. We knew how to shift from high to low—that's all there were—by shoving a lever forward *hard*, or pulling it back, also *hard*. The lever was outside the car. A certain amount of blacksmith-shop instruction—even the word "garage" was unknown—had failed to register for the simple reason that we had developed no mechanical brains to register it on. We were further handicapped by the fact that we had been horsemen so long that horseback transportation was second nature to us. Our instincts in getting around the country were all oriented toward what we were accustomed to doing with a horse. Why this was a handicap will appear in due course.

The highway then had no recognizable relation to the dark, polished ribbon our cars nowadays roll up so

smoothly in front and pay out so smoothly behind. Gas taxes for the roads were remotely in the future. Indeed, at times it seemed that gasoline itself was in the future! There were no filling stations, naturally, and no garages. Corner groceries kept only "stove gasoline," and our carburetors would not handle that. On our running boards we carried three cans, painted red, blue, and black, filled respectively with reserves of gasoline, oil, and water. Also there were no repairmen; only occasionally an ingenious-minded blacksmith who was willing to try to "figger her out." Road improvements—if any—were limited to "ditching, crowning, and scraping." These were generally done by adjacent farmers, in their slack season, who thus got some credit against their taxes.

For a week or so after such treatment one had a fair earth center sloping away toward the drain ditch on either hand. Incidentally, that is the reason why this side of the Atlantic abandoned the English custom of driving to the left, and why the steering wheels of the early motorcars were located on the right. On the long-established but narrow English turnpikes the important thing for a driver to think of was not to lock wheels with a passing vehicle. With us the important thing to think of in passing was how near the ditch—or the edge—we dared turn.

The above-mentioned fair earth center did not long endure against farm wagons, hayricks, and the like. We

were soon back to normal of chuckhole and rut and "high center." An occasional hundred yards or so without a deep chuckhole was no particular good, for if you speeded up to enjoy it, you were sure to plunge violently into the next before you could slow up. Unless, of course, you had what the pilot books call local knowledge, and knew exactly where it was. (That is why we knew Alley was talking through his gearcase when he claimed that twenty-one-miles-an-hour average!)

A light rain filled the chuckholes with water, and softened the bottoms of them. The estimation of mud puddles is a lost art. We early acquired a true roadcraft in reading a score of small indications that told us whether we could crawl through in low, or whether our wheels would spin and dig us in so deep that we must wait for the next horse to pull us out. Even at worst, this was not always necessary; we carried wide iron flanges which we could strap crosswise on our tires to give us the one strong heave of traction to lift us out. Part of our equipment, also, was a stout iron stake, and a sledge hammer, and a thin wire cable.

Directions: With the sledge hammer drive the stake firmly somewhere ahead of the bogged car. Hitch one end of the cable to the stake. Lead the cable back, and take two wraps about the projecting hubcap of a rear wheel. Hold the other end. Have your companion start the car. The revolving hubcup acts as a winch. You take

up the slack. One of three things happens, mentioned in the order of their probability: (a) the stake pulls out and you dodge it as it hurtles toward you; (b) the cable slips off the hubcap, and you sit down in the mud; (c) the car pulls out.

How about this trip? I thought we were going to hear about that!

That's the trouble with you fellows nowadays. You're accustomed to hopping in and kicking down on the starter, and hitting the road, all on the impetus of the moment's whim. There's no adventure in that. You're what my wife's old Negro mammy used to call too impatient. Why, one time I remember a day's trip hung in the balance of necessary abandonment because, at five of the afternoon before, the car suddenly began to miss on all two. From then until midnight I bent my ear to the tuning of that coil, altering the pitch of its buzz in vain. At last, thoroughly disgusted, I addressed to it a few mule skinner remarks and gave it a kick. Then it functioned perfectly. We are going to start when we have a good ready. There is enormous fun in getting a good ready. That is another simple pleasure of which the mechanical age has deprived us.

NO. V. IT WAS THEN KNOWN AS JAYRIDING

There were as yet no paved roads. Furthermore, against any proposal for paved roads burst a storm of

opposition too violent for belief today. Nobody could see any advantage in paved roads. Their only effect would be to encourage these newfangled speed demons. We were not popular, and we knew there was no earthly reason why we should be. The prevailing horse viewed us with alarm and tried to go away from us as far and as fast as he could. If no other route for the purpose offered but a telegraph pole, he would attempt to climb that. We were on a very fragile sufferance, and we knew it, and we tried to be as considerate as we could, even, at times, to the extent of parking as near the fence as possible and dismounting to help lead the team by.

George Kaime and I were riding horseback on a peaceful road. George was just back from his first long motor trip as Billy Wyman's guest. We came around a bend suddenly upon a basket pony phaeton with a nurse and a couple of children. Instantly George leaped from his saddle and rushed to hold the pony's bit. Then he came to and looked foolish.

When we overtook someone driving in our direction, we honked once very gently, and dropped back out of the dust until a crossroad gave a horseman a chance to draw well aside. The ranch people, in spite of their antagonism, were generally pretty decent, and did so; but occasionally some old hard-shell would simply hump his back and jog on. Then we had either to eat dust until he got to where he was going, or take a chance on busting

a spring, or shaking loose some vital part, or upsetting completely in a glorious and bouncing attempt to brush by in the rough. Or get in a fight! This smoldering resentment came near to being fanned into the flame of a real antagonism when, two years later, a few morons began to try for "road records." Then, especially in the mountain districts, some of the old-timers actually resumed carrying their old forty-fives, and let it be publicly known that they were on the warpath. The first campaign for even a modest good-roads appropriation was voted down by a majority that nowadays would make Hitler look like a piker. This attitude obtained even in the towns. In Santa Barbara only State Street was asphalted, and they kicked like blazes on doing that much. As a consequence, with the first heavy rains, we laid up our cars for the winter, and went back to horses. Definitely!

Occasionally we pariahs ran on humorous and happy surprises. Once Fernand Lungren and I came around a bend in the road, unexpectedly, on a ramshackle, wobble-wheeled buggy going the same way we were. In its seat dozed an old man with long white whiskers. Between the shafts dreamed an ancient flea-bitten gray horse, just enough awake to keep his legs moving. So sharp was the bend that we were right on top of them before we knew of their existence.

The horse uttered an equine shriek and departed. We

stared in consternation after the enormous cloud of dust, then followed gingerly, our hearts in our boots. The standard runaway of those days lasted only about so long. Then either a wheel was smashed, or the horse tried to make a right-angled turn, or the vehicle upset, after which the animal continued on with reins flying and the torn-loose thills—shafts, to you—battering his hind legs. This was an awesome and terrifying catastrophe to adults and a glorious rapture to small boys. It furnished material for one of the very best daydream heroics—the madly dashing horses, and Her clinging desperately to the swaying seat, and You leaping from the curb and swinging from the foam-flecked bridle.

But it is not so much fun picking up the corpses and pieces, especially when you are in a degree responsible. We followed on, looking for the wreck. To our astonishment and relief we overtook the outfit intact. This time we stopped at a careful distance behind.

"Would you mind," I shouted across the gap, "turning off a minute at the next crossroad so we can get by?"

"Hell no!" he yelled. "Come on up and do it again! I ain't got no such speed out of the danged old fool sence she was a colt!"

All this was in the comparatively level open country. When you got up into the mountains, the situation became acute. The roads there were notches cut just wide enough for a single vehicle. There was no passing except

on "turnouts." These came once in a while. They were supposed to be placed strategically so that the wayfarer could see the road from one to the other, and so not get caught head on to someone else. Nevertheless, you were caught. Thus you learned to drive backward as confidently and almost as fast as you could drive forward: another art lost to this effete generation. The engineers who laid out these roads followed the old Spanish custom: when you wanted to go uphill, you went up; and when you wanted to go downhill, you went down. And they had Spanish horses to do it, on anything short of the perpendicular. Only occasionally were these old road-makers forced to a few grudging switchbacks, and then they made the hairpin turns as sharp as they could just to get even.

We carried curved spirit levels screwed to the side of the car to measure these gradients. The latter ran from ten to twenty-four per cent. When they passed over the rocky outcrops which are the foundation of some of our best mountains, the surface heaved into a succession of half-submerged round boulders, of splintered remnants left from the blasting powder, and of "slippery Sals," which means a sort of smooth rock apron.

I am not exaggerating. These conditions persisted for some years even after there were sufficient motorists to form a fraternity strong enough to kick and numerous enough to get together to swap experiences. Certain of

the mountain passes had a legendary reputation for being tough. There was even a sort of rivalry between them. The man who had never been over them tightened his belt with a sinking mixture of curiosity and dread. His frame of mind was much like that of the ancient Greek mariner, about for the first time to tackle Scylla and Charybdis. Then, when he had managed it and was safely at the bottom, he probably spat in the sea—beg your pardon, I mean the dust—and said:

“Tough, hell! Is *that* your San Juan grade! You ought to come down and tackle the Casitas!”

Or the other way round, depending on whether he lived north or south.

Those early cars were low in power, and they were particular about their gasoline, and they demanded their proper amount of tinkering, and they boiled like tea-kettles, but, by golly, they could and did take it! Not so much to look at, but sturdy as the tough, rough little mountain cayuses whose prototype they were. Any old fat slob can amble along a park bridle path on a stall-raised fancy palfrey, but it takes a man to fork a mustang in the hills!

NO. VI. OFF IN A CLOUD OF DUST!

We set forth early, as was meet and proper for those facing a journey of one hundred and sixteen miles. Whether it was to be a day's journey, or shorter, or

longer, never entered our minds. Our attitude was typical of the motorists of that day: We knew where we were headed; we intended and expected to get there. But we were not so silly as to schedule the intention.

Everything was lovely. We made Carpinteria in a little over the hour. We chugged up the steep, narrow, and twisting Casitas grade without meeting anybody, or breaking a spring, or getting a puncture, or boiling excessively, or any of those things. The cascara and mountain lilacs were in flower, mocking birds and quail called to us what sounded like congratulations. As we mounted higher, the depths of the cañons filled with gray-blue shadows. The line of breakers along the shore line, immobilized by distance, separated the map squares of the land from the crinkled sea as though by a thin strip of cotton wool. Rob at this time was a practicing paint artist. These things hit his funny bone. He suggested we stop so I could see them too. All I was seeing, while under way, was the road. We drew aside, and halted, and enjoyed ourselves. The top of the grade was only about a hundred yards ahead.

When we had seen our fill, I climbed back to the seat and turned on the switch. Rob seized the crank. It seemed to be stuck fast. He got his feet under him and gave a good heave. As he had been college champion wrestler of his weight, this brought results. The car leaped at him like a rattlesnake. Foiled by Rob's agility, it died in its tracks.

I descended and tested the handle. It was indubitably locked. We wasted no time in foolish repinings, or regrets that we had not gone on that few hundred yards to the top, whence we could have coasted. We were persons of experience and decision, firm and resourceful characters, in fact able to face and overcome emergencies as they arose. We knew exactly what to do, and we did it, at once. We walked back down the road five miles to Stanley Park. From there we telephoned Harry Wood in Santa Barbara and told him about it. Harry was the only man in that section of the universe who knew anything about cars. He had sold me this one. He listened attentively.

"The plates of your planetary gears are stuck together," said he.

"We have no education in astronomy," we returned.

"You don't need any," said Harry. "What you need is a beer bottle full of kerosene oil."

He described carefully a certain plug which we were to remove.

"Pour the kerosene in that hole," he instructed, "and let it stand fifteen minutes or so. Then work on the crank handle till she loosens up—with the switch off," he warned. "Then drain off the kerosene."

He described another plug we could take out to permit the draining.

"You can throw away the beer bottle," he concluded.

We thanked Harry, and cadged the bottle and kerosene, and returned up the grade to the car. Rob suggested walking to the summit and back to make it an even ten-mile hike, but we decided we were no sticklers for round numbers. We did as Harry Wood had told us, and it was even as he had said, which seemed to us marvelous and a kind of black magic.

A mile or so beyond the summit we came upon a situation not uncommon in the mountains. Across the U of a hairpin turn a slide had filled the road.

I think any less experienced travelers than ourselves would have turned back. The way was definitely blocked. It never occurred to us to do so. We had been up against this sort of thing before. We knew exactly what to do. In such a situation you turned your horse square at right angles to the road, leaned on the brakes as hard as you could, and slid down the mountain side into the cañon bed. As long as you kept headed straight down, you wouldn't tip over. If it was too steep for the brakes, you cut a small tree and dragged it behind. Then you rested your horse for a minute or so and climbed straight up the other side to the road again, making it in one dash, if you could.

There weren't any small trees to cut, and we had no ax if there had been. So Rob doubled for a tree. He did well at it until we were halfway down. Then he sort of lost traction and flopped in the wind like a burgee. After a

few alarming and accelerating seconds, we hit bottom with a crash. We were right side up. There we were, in the stony wash, at the bottom of a steep ravine. The only solution to such a predicament nowadays would be a long cable and a wrecking car, which had not then been invented. Lacking these, any sane modern driver, with experience in power and traction, would simply give up for the time being, even with a hundred horsepower at command. But, then, no sane modern driver would place himself in any such fix.

We had only eight horsepower, but a practically undiminished supply of ignorance. Also it must not be forgotten that our long experience with horses was still untarnished. We paused to get our breath and look ourselves over. Nothing was broken, not even our spirits. Rob climbed aboard, and we doughtily pointed our eight-horsepower nose at the side of the mountain. She dashed at it pluckily; the rear wheels spun, finally bit; the engine slowed—died! We began to slide back, obstinately, against the best efforts of the brakes. We were again in the creek bed at the bottom of the cañon. Our climb had been about three feet.

The next obvious thing was for Rob to get out and push. That is what we did with horse-drawn vehicles. We made about six inches more than at the first effort, and Rob had to scramble hard to get out of the way when, for the second time, she slid back.

Now I submit that (a) anybody with any sense, or (b) anybody with any experience, or (c) anybody without the dauntless, resolute, indomitable, and completely chuckleheaded pertinacity then characteristic of both of us might have considered himself in a fix. Experience does inhibit the reasoning powers in certain directions. We had no thought of giving it up merely because experience had already proved it couldn't be done: we had not had experience! We sat down to figure it out. Our figuring ran about as follows:

We had gone that three feet all right, and at that point our engine had quit. It had not quit abruptly, but by slowing down until it died. We could go, say, two feet before it even began to slow down. Thing to do was to go those two feet, throw out the clutch. Then she wouldn't die. Then speed up the engine, throw in the clutch, and go another two feet. This, repeated about fifty times, would take us to the top.

So far, our reasoning was perfect. The next problem was to keep what we had—theoretically—gained. The brakes would not do it: that had been proved. What we wanted was a fence post. So we climbed up to the road and looked for a fence post. Even in unfenced mountain country like this, we knew we would find one. Two things the California of those days could always supply: baling wire and fence posts. Optimists were always clearing little patches of land in the most out-of-the-way

places, and fencing them, and building shacks out of mesquite and coal-oil cans, and planting a few fruit trees and abandoning them. We returned shortly with our fence post.

I had the best of it. Knowledge is power. I knew which levers to shove on. So I sat in the seat as mahout, and Rob did the hard, hot, dirty work. My job was to let in the clutch on the wildly racing engine, and to keep it there while the poor little car clawed and heaved under the shock, and to snatch out the clutch at the last split second before the engine died, at the same time uttering a wild yell. The yell was signal to Rob, who thereupon dropped the fence post across behind the rear wheels and planted his weight on it to keep it from sliding back.

That was our system, and against all sanity it worked. At the moment we had no qualms. A lot of things were distinctly probable. If the thing had got away from us and gone backward, especially after we had made some elevation, we would have come to a magnificent and perhaps fatal smash. If the engine had been permitted to die, it would have been practically impossible to start it again. If Rob had missed by a hair chocking those rear wheels at just the right moment and the right angle, or if his weight had not held the fence post—if what must have been a remarkably close balance of forces had tipped by ever so little on the wrong side— Oh well, they didn't. And we did not think of them. We were busy.

I wish I had counted how many times we—successfully—repeated that delicately co-ordinated maneuver. Sometimes we made not over six inches! Again, gloriously, we grabbed off as much as two yards! Then Rob had to hustle, to pick up that heavy post, and scramble after, and hurl himself into place like a boy falling on a football! But always we gained. Had there been anyone on the road opposite we must have looked to him like a couple of somewhat imbecile ants urging a large beetle up an exorbitantly steep precipice. That the mechanism did not shatter under the repeated shocks of taking the whole weight of the car is a testimonial to something.

We were again on the road, headed for Los Angeles. Rob threw away the fence post, wiped his streaming brow, and climbed in beside me. We did not comment particularly in the way of either triumph or congratulation. We had started south. Well, we were still going south. Just a couple of heroes and did not know it. We were too dumb—luckily, for dumbness was our best asset, as we were shortly to prove once more.

NO. VII. WE FINISH OUR HISTORIC TRIP

As we were on the down grade, and encountered no more slides, and met no one, our descent of the Pass was uneventful. We had conquered the Casitas!

Down the shaded, winding road in the valley we chugged, and so shortly came to the Ventura River.

About all anyone nowadays notices about the Ventura—or indeed any other river, creek, or wash—is the wonderful concrete bridge. Back in the horse days, however, they did not build bridges unless they had to. Most of the time you forded or pulled through the sandy bottom, depending on whether it was winter or summer. Only across all-year-round deep water, or a very occasional perpendicularly eroded *barranca* did they bother to construct a bridge. Bridges are expensive; and, besides, how are you going to water your horse from a bridge? When we came to the ford of the Ventura, we drove in unhesitatingly as we had already a dozen times passed through it on horseback. In the exact middle, as was to be expected, we came to rest with the water just below the floor boards, and the carburetor, naturally, well submerged. We knew nothing about that. We merely wondered why she had stopped.

It is not unlikely that ours may have been the first car to cross the Ventura at this point. I do not know. At any rate, we were among the pioneers. This proved eventually to be a perfectly feasible ford all summer; though in the spring, before the water dropped, a good many cars got stuck there. After a few years, when volume of traffic justified, a local yokel lurked in the vicinage with a team of horses, and pulled them out for a dollar. It paid him pretty well until the acetylene lamps of a night motorist surprised him in the act of deepening the hole,

in the enterprising intention of extending his season. I don't know what they did to him—if anything—but he gave them an idea in reverse, so to speak. They hauled in the rocks he had hauled out, and a lot more, so you could get through at any time short of flood.

Personally, we were high and dry on the seat, but eminently static, and likely to remain so unless we did something about it. The chances of outside assistance were remote. The obvious thing to do would have been for one of us to wade ashore and go in quest of horses and a rope. But neither of us knew how far away, in that country of magnificent distances and sparse population, the nearest ranch might be. So we bent to the problem our powerful intellects, which I must remind you were untrammelled by the restrictions of either knowledge or experience. Therefore, our reasoning was clear and to the point. It ran as follows:

The engine made the car go. It made the car go by turning over. There were possible two ways of turning over: (a) by the explosion of gasoline in the cylinders and (b) by means of the crank until the engine started to explode. Now, we argued, since the gasoline business had laid down on us, we would adopt (b). If we put the clutch in low gear and then turned the crank, she ought to move forward. Provided, of course, we were strong enough.

The only way to find out was to try. We took off our

shoes and socks and pants, and tied our shirts up under our armpits, and went overboard. To our gratification the idea proved good. Taking turn about we cranked that car not only through the river, but—for good measure—up the opposite bank to the level. It was rather slow business. You see, while we and gasoline were both fulfilling the same function, the r.p.m. of gasoline was fifteen hundred and our r.p.m. was about thirty. But we got there; and we put on our pants, and had a smoke, and enjoyed the shade and the beautiful sun-drenched landscape outside it, and took a rest before tackling the next job, which was to get going again.

Even we realized that the engine must have shipped some water, and that water and gasoline do not get on well together. Did we not possess a big square of chamois skin through which to strain our wayside purchases of "Red Crown"? We must get the water out of the engine. When we had finished our smokes we went at it.

Our procedure was as simple as the minds that conceived it. We cranked. Rob did it for five minutes, then I did it for five minutes. We figured that if the engine turned over in its regular cycle, the water in it must follow the same course that the gasoline normally followed and must, like it, eventually come out through the exhaust. This was correct. At the end of exactly forty-five minutes we got a first feeble and spluttering pop. I am glad that we knew nothing of the pet cocks below

each cylinder through which we could have drained off that water in ten seconds. I am glad we did not know enough to take out the spark plugs to relieve the compression against which we bent our backs. We needed exercise; and when again we hit the road, we did so by a triumph of pure ingenuity, pure reason, instead of secondhand by mere knowledge.

At sundown we rolled into Ventura where we spent the night. We felt that we had done a creditable day's journey, and we had, though the same objective can now be reached in three quarters of an hour.

Adventure's soul is the unexpected. Today the motorist knows pretty well what the day will contain. He has no anticipations for the reason that he can predict accurately, barring sheer accident, what will happen. We had no anticipations either, though for the opposite reason. But we did set out each morning in thrilling uncertainty.

Thus we had no premonition of what later were to become famous as the Sands of Del Rio.

The general lack of bridges, mentioned before, emphasized the number of dry, sandy washes. Sometimes the nature of this sand was such that one could get through it in low gear if one kept going quietly and very steadily. The least speeding up or slowing down, the most momentary loss of traction that altered the smooth revolution of the driving wheels was fatal. Once one of

them began to spin, all was over. They dug themselves in. But a fine touch on the throttle would get you through, and you got so you could recognize this sort of sand by certain indications, distinguishing it from just plain, loose, deep sand, to be treated with real respect. You became acquainted with a variety of expedients from which you selected the one appropriate to the situation. Here are several, graded from simple to serious:

Insert between the axle and body of the car blocks of wood, and cinch down on the springs with straps and buckles brought for the purpose. This eliminated all spring action, kept the weight of the car at all times solidly on the ground, so the traction was constant and the wheels had no temptation to begin spinning.

Deflate the rear tires. This gave a wider tread. Used in conjunction with the preceding, it worked pretty well. But it was tough on casings, and a whole lot tougher on the motorist. Those tires had to be reflatd—if there is such a word—by means of an adolescent bicycle pump in the rhythm of a hundred strokes—and rest, a hundred strokes—and rest, a hundred strokes—and rest, until apoplexy intervened.

Cut small brush and lay a sketchy trail. Good. Slow. Laborious. Fatally easy to miss with the rear wheels.

Wait for a farm wagon and blandish or bribe the ranchman. For this purpose you carried a short wire

cable with a grab hook on either end. All right, but, of course, uncertain, and subject to long waits.

Go around, even if this involved a detour of twenty miles. This last was the most certain, and the most frequently used. It ultimately became the standard procedure at the point to which our narrative has now brought us. The Sands of Del Rio were not a matter of river bed or dry wash. They were an integral part of the highway. The hard adobe soil intermitted. The road surface became sand, clean sand, yellow sand like that of the ocean beach above the high-tide mark. Indeed, it was as though the sea must here have been and hence withdrawn at no very distant time in the past. The highway led fair and straight between the tall eucalyptus; one could see down its whole length and out into the smiling country beyond. But, to the motorist, it ended at Del Rio as definitely as if a high stone wall had been built across it. One turned, as a matter of course, square to the right to Oxnard, and then to the left on miles of naïve dirt roads, and then to the left again on a species of country lane, and so at last came out again to the highway, and could look back, and there was Del Rio behind one, only a quarter mile or so astern. No one begrudged the time and distance; or, indeed, wasted a thought on them. Simply, that was the route, and so remained for years.

Rob and I did not know that that was the route. All

we knew was that here was a straight road that people drove on: we saw some one doing it, in a wobble-wheeled old side-bar buggy.

We proceeded about twenty feet and settled down to improve our education.

When the weight of the sand slowed the car to a stop, our first thought, naturally, was to give her more power. By the time the spinning wheels had dug us down half hub deep, we had acquired practical knowledge of the action of the differential, and also of the relation of traction to forward movement. We excavated the rear wheels by scooping away the sand with our hands. Then we laid our leather coats and the lap robe in front of them, forcing the edges far enough under the tires so they could get a grip. The wheels would roll across the coats and the robe, we would then pick up the latter and replace them in front; and so on, practically *ad infinitum*, considering the distance ahead.

I climbed in and started her up. With a low growl of joy the rear wheels fell upon the coats and robe and threw them about twenty feet straight behind, in the manner of a dog scratching gravel, after which they began again to dig in—a maneuver which I frustrated by promptly shutting her off.

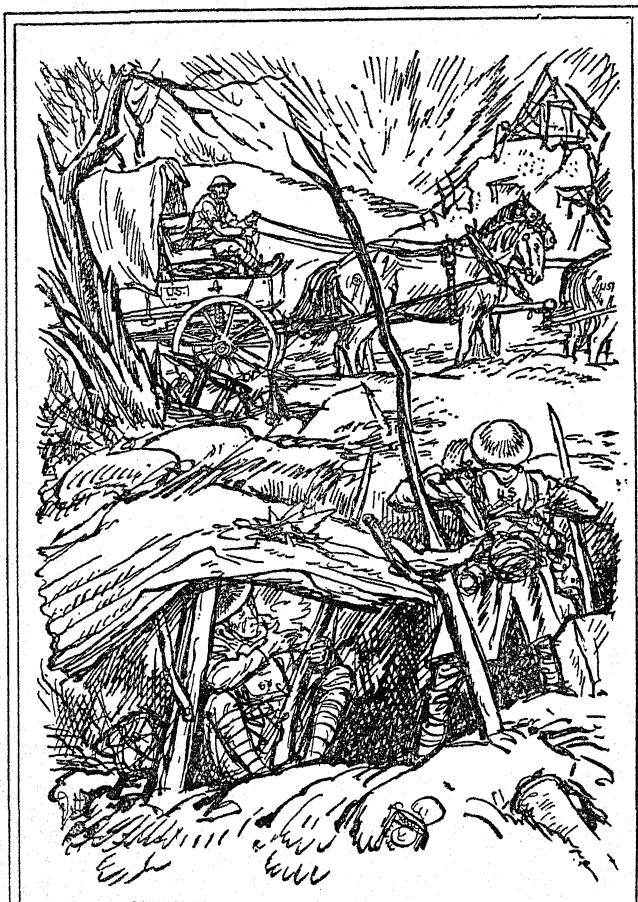
The rest, I fear, is anticlimax, though I like to think that we would have triumphed again anyhow. We had still untapped reserves of ignorance and obstinacy—I

mean ingenuity and tenacity of character. But we were spared their exercise. Quite simply, a ranchman came along with an empty bean rick and a rope. We ate our roadside lunch the other side of the Conejo, and we rolled into Los Angeles before dark.

Only one little item had the gods of our enlightenment reserved. Near the Plaza we came upon freshly watered asphalt, sideslipped a little, applied the brakes, and, solemnly and with dignity, proceeded to make one complete revolution. Fortunately there were no vehicles near us. Fortunately our blazing six-miles-an-hour put us in no danger of upset. Fortunately we turned on our axis, and so did not climb the sidewalk, though an alarmed and wildly scattering population thought we were going to do so. The maneuver amazed us. Later we learned it was called a skid.

The highway of today has its distinct advantages, I admit. But of one thing it is incapable. No hundred miles of it can teach as many new things as Rob and I learned on that trip. Nor can its traversal bestow the same exalted complacency of accomplishment. Heroes: that was us!

Grim-Visaged War



Grim-Visaged War

EVERY SO OFTEN someone comes along with a lot of reasons why I should write my autobiography. I have not heard, from these occasional kind friends, any good reason. I have written all I want to write about myself, directly or indirectly. It is wholly unimportant, even to myself, what specifically I did or saw in, say, the year 1908. But these rare requests have made me think it fun to run over in memory various unimportantances that have strangely persisted, and from whose contemplation I extract a never-failing relish, and to classify them, and to try to determine why they tickle me so. And from that I have come to see that these things are mostly amusing things, mere anecdotes in a way; and yet they are significant anecdotes, indicative of what sort of fellow I am, how my head is shaped, what appeals to me. They indicate a trend of collectorship. That is a kind of autobiography.

Take World War I. I was in the thing from the beginning of our participation, in a way. That is, I joined up with a cavalry troop in April, and switched to raising recruits for about the only volunteer regiment—of field

artillery—permitted before the draft took hold. I trained away like blazes at the dismaying and totally unexpected mathematics for which I had slight aptitude; went to France, and was detached for all sorts of odd jobs, and saw a lot of the show from a lot of angles that had only indirectly to do with the actual fighting. Perhaps an account of all that would interest somebody. I doubt it. Even in recollection my small part in the solemn, swatting pageantry of historical significance interests me very slightly. Indeed, I'd have to refer to files and letters to recollect it at all. I do not particularly care to take that bother.

But certain things stand out. I really worked hard on that preliminary volunteer job. My acquaintance in the southwest was extensive. In a few weeks, with the enthusiastic aid of many friends, we had actually signed up a whole battalion, a large proportion of whom were hard-bitten cowboys, rangers, out-of-door old-timers. They were good men, who knew as much of army methods and discipline as I did—just about.

One of these, from Arizona, was an expert hunter and trailer, but unfortunately had only one good eye. The other looked all right, but he could see nothing with it. While waiting for his medical examination, he memorized the oculist's card, so when the good eye was covered he was able to rattle off the letters glibly. Then the medical officer turned the card over. My recruit was

stumped. He walked up to the doctor and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Aw, say, Doc," he pleaded, "them Germans haven't got them little letters printed all over them!"

I am glad to say this particular medico was a sport, and possessed of common sense. Jim was accepted. And justly so. He could see out of one sound eye more than the average man could with two.

Another boy, living on an outlying ranch far over two ranges of mountains, heard of the enlistments, and also, mistakenly, that they closed at five o'clock the following day. He started out at once, rode all night and all day, and arrived late in the afternoon. Immediately he was sworn in he hunted me up and asked for a leave of absence.

"But you've just joined; how can you expect leave so soon?" I expostulated.

"I'll be right back, Cap'n," he pleaded.

"Can't be done. Why do you want to go, anyway?"

"When I came through the Bar X I heerd Bill Jordan had said I was a coward," said he. "I didn't have time to 'tend to him. I want to go back and lick him."

These men learned the formalities of discipline slowly. They realized its essential value, but they did not see the sense of some of it. In training camp it was sometimes my duty to make night rounds of the sentries, not only to see if they were on the job, but also to hear them

say their prescribed little lesson: "Who goes there?" "Friend." "Advance, friend, and be recognized"—that sort of thing. One sentry serenely permitted me to confront him, and no word said. I chided him, while he stared at me round-eyed.

"Don't you know," I ended my homily, "that you should then say 'Advance, friend, and be recognized'?"

For the first time he displayed comprehension.

"That's just it, Cap'n," he assured me earnestly, "in this yere moonlight I'd already recognized you!"

In France, what with replacement drafts and the like, my southwesterners were scattered far. I found myself on detached duty with a sweet little job on my hands. It so happened I could make French people understand me. So the general in command haled me before him. In fifty-two hours from that moment a new division—about thirty thousand men—was due to arrive from the United States. They must be billeted. The billets would cover a number of villages—my recollection is that it was twenty-one—"see map herewith." These villages had never been billeted before. No subordinate officers immediately available as assistants. Transportation one motorcycle and orderly, with one of these baby bathtub sidecars. I caught a sardonic gleam in the general's eyes. He was giving me an impossible job, and he knew it. But he had successfully transferred the buck handed him by some bigger general up at H.Q. It was now up to me.

Each of those twenty-one villages must be visited. In each must be selected and designated individual quarters for officers, housing for men. Appropriate division, regimental and company headquarters must be found; kitchen locations; supply depots. A sufficiency of wood and straw must be arranged. The water must be investigated. All these things must be done individually and the quarters plainly chalk-marked. Sketch maps must be prepared showing their locations, for obviously I could not conduct personally to twenty-one villages at once. Furthermore, the inhabitants must be educated to understand what it was all about, for, it must be remembered, this was their first experience.

I started out at once. I was going to show that general. Early in the forenoon the motorcycle broke down, between villages, out in the middle of nowhere.

While we tinkered a huge army truck came rattling along. I stopped it. Besides the driver, it contained an incredible number of trunks and a very beautiful brass-bound second lieutenant.

"Whither away, Lieutenant?" I asked him.

"I am delivering the personal baggage of General Blank and staff to his new headquarters," said he.

"You are wrong," said I; "you are going with me."

"But, Major!" cried the young man in dismay, "I have positive orders!"

"What are they?"

"To deliver this baggage at the earliest possible moment!"

"And that," said I, clambering aboard, "is exactly what you're going to do—at the earliest *possible* moment. Let's go."

I outranked him, so the five-ton truck, and the driver, and the baggage, and the beautiful second lieutenant and myself proceeded across the smiling—or possibly grinning—French landscape. He was a capable second lieutenant, and proved to be almost as helpful as his truck.

Well, we made it. I worked just fifty hours out of the fifty-two. When the troop trains carrying that division steamed in, we were ready for them. By this time someone had dug me up some assistance, so guides were ready to conduct the various units to their various happy homes where awaited them wood, water, straw, and a place for each and every man—thirty thousand of them—to sleep. It was a darn good job, if I do say it as shouldn't, and with a sense of satisfaction I retired to my own humble billet, and ungirdled the Sam Browne, and prepared to sink to the husks for a much-needed rest. A rap at the door preceded an orderly. Colonel Dingbat wished to see me; at once!

Wearily I rebuckled the Sam Browne and went. He outranked me. I discovered him to be a nice fresh colonel, newly minted, and therefore terrifically important and military. In the civil life from which he had so recently

sprung he must have belonged to one of the self-important stations in life—senator, or head butler, or bowwow lawyer, or proprietor of a hole-in-the-wall exclusive haberdashery, or something like that. He told me that his quarters did not suit him, and that he wanted them changed at once. He pounced upon my slight expression of doubt. I could change them, couldn't I? I was billeting officer, wasn't I?

I acknowledged this. Rather wearily I tried to explain to him that squeezing thirty thousand men in on top of the normal population was no idle joke. Men were tucked into every conceivable vacancy.

"I could not displace another colonel to give you other quarters," I told this one. "It would have to be a major or someone of lower rank. And in that case you would get very much less desirable rooms, for I have tried to grade all billets according to rank. By the way," I inquired as an afterthought, "what's the matter with these?"

"Sir," said this nice, new, freshly minted colonel just landed from the United States, "I do not like the pattern of the wallpaper."

At this time there was a war going on outside. I had slept but two hours out of the past fifty-three or four. I was not myself. I committed a military crime against a superior officer. I turned around and went out, without reply, without a click of the heel, without saluting!

Having by some miracle escaped court-martial, I continued my philosophic collection of the various types the ploughshare of war turned up so abundantly. The A.E.F. was a big show. It had all kinds. The most of them were good, sensible bodies, doing their best in very trying circumstances. One did not notice them so much, though occasionally some stood out through the brilliance of plain common sense. It was at one time the fashion to extol the civilian officer over the regular as being less hidebound, more inclined to cut red tape; as being more flexible; as, in short, possessing more plain common sense. Of course there were Colonel Dingbats on both sides of the fence, but my own experience was that, with certain notable exceptions, and on the average, I'd rather deal with the regular than the amateur when it came to getting things done. Ordnance officers and quartermasters were likely to be the worst. That was natural. They were in charge of values, in property and money, and they had to sign papers and vouchers and such things to represent these values. Somehow they never got over a quaint idea that the papers really amounted to something in the way of responsibility. In civil life and in the peacetime establishment undoubtedly they did, but these poor ginks could not rid themselves of the notion. As captain, and later as major in command of troops, I signed and sent on tons of papers, mostly in triplicate. Some days, it seemed to me, I did little else. There must

have been literally thousands of them. On just three occasions it became desirable to refer to one of the things, and on precisely those three occasions the papers could not be found. When I reflected on how many captains and majors, not to speak of ranks above and below, were also signing tons of documents, likewise in triplicate, I was not surprised. I do not know what ever became of them. I suppose they must have satisfied someone's idea of the fitness of things.

Certainly the average ordnance and quartermaster officer—at least of the lower ranks—took them seriously. I never could. I would sign anything in order to get what filled the moment's need. My impression is that I made myself liable for about three million dollars, deductible from my personal estate. I have never heard from any of them. Perhaps they are keeping them for my autograph.

Once I was going somewhere on some urgent official errand when my motorcycle went bust. By good fortune this happened near a transportation dump where were six other motorcycles of the same make, that had also gone bust, and were awaiting spare parts that had been duly requisitioned. A canvass of the situation showed that by taking parts from several and concentrating them on one, we could put that one in condition for the road. Then, when the requisitioned parts arrived, the ones we had taken could be replaced. Simple. But would the officer in charge consent? He would not! These parts

had been requisitioned each for a certain motorcycle, and they must go to that particular motorcycle *and to no other!*

"But they are interchangeable," I argued; "what difference does it make?"

He started all over again to tell me that the Papers—

I cut him off there and went to hunt up the local general. Of course I was supposed to go on up Through Channels; but I early found that usually—not always—if you skipped over some intermediates and could go high enough, you got into the common-sense stratum. Sure enough.

"Major White," said the general, "if you can find any way to make one of those damn contraptions go, you do it."

So I did, and I did not sign a thing.

I knew of another chap, and this was an officer of lower rank, who had charge of an ordnance dump. If anybody asked for something, such as a breechblock of a three-inch gun or similar knickknack, he got it; with Papers if possible, but without them if necessary. This man said that it did not seem to him credible that anybody wanted these things as personal souvenirs.

But everybody, in every army, skirmished and circumvented ordnance officers. Major Ian Hay Beith once told me an engaging tale of the British Service. Either he, or some other British officer, I forget which, broke the

breechblock of one of his field guns. He put in a requisition, followed it personally through brigade and division, after which it disappeared into the outer blue. Time passed. Following the usual custom, he swiped a breechblock from some other battery and went on with the war. He forgot all about it. And then, after weeks had passed, his requisition came back to him—but no breechblock! At the head of one column, in red ink, was written in a clerkly hand:

“You have not stated in this column your reason for desiring this breechblock.”

Major Beith seized his fountain pen.

“On account of the great European war,” he wrote, “which has now been raging for three years and a half.”

He narrowly escaped court-martial. War and Official Papers are a serious business; at least to the harassed individuals called officers. Most of them had a pretty keen feeling of responsibility, whether they used any sense in exercising it or not. Most of them worked a lot harder than the men they commanded. I think a lot of allowances should be made for their various manifestations of frazzled nerves, whether the form of them was hard-boiled or soft-boiled. The private soldier moved within strictly defined limits of duty. He could keep his sense of humor. And did.

At one time in our training the psychologists descended upon us. They were part of an intelligence test

of the whole Army. I believe in final result they assessed us as averaging about fourteen years of age, which beat out the movie producer's estimate of the general public by two years. They went at it very intently and solemnly, and were extravagantly pleased to have so much material to work on. Unfortunately, for my complete faith in all their results, my tent was at the head of C Battery Street, and through its thin walls I overheard a good deal that was not intended for me. The boys returning from their intelligence tests here encountered outgoing comrades and exchanged views. I regret to report that my section of the United States Army did not seem to be taking this thing with becoming seriousness. Instead of co-operating with these learned men to prove what bright boys they were, they were using their ingenuity to extract some fun out of it without getting caught. The more plausibly moronic most of these scallawags could make themselves out, the better they liked it, and the bigger the laugh. They had no personal pride. To the contrary. They had long since noted the fact that the moment a man showed signs of intelligence of any kind, that moment he was given more work to do.

The taking of these tests was obligatory to the men, but optional to the officers. I cannot speak of them at first hand, for I did not volunteer. I had volunteered for the duration, and that let me out of the volunteering business. Beside which I did not want to learn the horrid

truth. But I heard considerable about them—from the ribald point of view of the men. And my opinion is that these psychologists got a fearful lot of awfully phony dope. They rated that man's army much too low; to the Army's vast delight. No great harm in that. The trouble is that they have been using that same dope ever since as a basis for all sorts of theory. My advice is to start over again.

One of the tests, as near as I could make out from my eavesdropping, ran about as follows: The victim was asked to state a number, of two digits. The examiner then wrote it on the blackboard, but with the digits reversed. A stop watch snapped the time it took the victim to recognize the "mistake" and to expostulate.

Appeared before the board a long, lank, saturnine cowboy sort of person of extreme taciturnity. He was asked to give a number, and mentioned 46. The examiner wrote down 64; the timekeeper snapped the watch; they waited. Nothing happened. Private Smith stared cowlike at the blackboard, apparently quite satisfied. They decided to give him another chance to lift himself from the subimbecile category, though one try was all he was supposed to have.

"Thirty-two," Private Smith placidly acceded to this second request.

Twenty-three appeared on the blackboard. Ensued a long period of tense expectancy. These examiners were

humane creatures. They wanted desperately to have Private Smith make some kind of a showing—any kind—just so they could give him some other mark than zero. But Private Smith just continued to sit. So they broke all precedent.

"Now, Smith," pleaded the head examiner, "give me another number. And notice me when I write it on the blackboard," which was going pretty far toward connivance, it seems to me, and I should mark that examiner about 35 for conscientiousness, but a full 100 for benevolence. "All right, Smith, give me another number."

"Seventy-seven," said Smith, and added, in the lazy southwestern cowboy drawl, "and try to change that one hind end to."

Our Allies, especially the British, never did understand our men's type of humor. Nor did ours ever wholly realize that their solemn fooling could be taken seriously. That is largely how they got their reputation for "brag and bluster."

"Not too bad," was a Tommy's typical reply to a question of his accomplishment.

"Me? Why, buddy, I'm the best little old performer at that who ever stepped. I darn near invented that game! You're looking at a champeen, boy," said the American, and it never crossed his mind that he could be taken literally. That is how this "we-won-the-war" stuff started, though a considerable impetus was given it when the de-

lighted doughboy realized how much it annoyed the other fellow. He knew better, of course. In spite of the verdict of the psychologists, his intelligence averaged high; and especially that phase of it that has to do with the sense of proportion. He took things as they came, and got all he could out of them.

A story was told in France of a horse-drawn wagon in charge of a typical Westerner—who might have been one of my own men. It was plodding at the only gait possible to it—slowly—across a fire-swept open. The driver, his foot on the long brake bar, his hands full of reins, was tooling placidly along, chewing tobacco, apparently quite oblivious to the bursting shells or the fact that at any moment one was likely to blow him and his outfit sky-high. He could not hurry, and he knew it. Someone in a shell hole sang out to him.

"Hi, soldier!" yelled this one with fine satire, "what do you think of the war?"

The driver of the wagon drew in his reins, thrust home the brake, wound the reins about the brake lever Western fashion, swung his feet sidewise over the end of the seat, humped over as though for a sociable chat. He ejected a stream of tobacco juice, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"She's a bear!" said he.

Then deliberately he swung his feet back, unwound his reins, released the brake, drove on.

This fine sense of the proportions was even better exemplified in a brief conversation after the Armistice. This was a social occasion: all buddies together, officers and men. In the crowd I happened on a small, smart, tough little soldier whose tunic was ablaze with decorations. He was a hard-bitten, independent-looking person, and his clipped speech, delivered through one corner of his mouth, spoke of New York's East Side. I looked over his ribbons with great interest, for never, outside the General Staff, had I seen so many on one man's breast. Evidently this little Bowery tough was quite some soldier.

I recognized them all but one, so I inquired about that.

"What medal is that, soldier?" I asked him.

"Dat?" he replied with fine distinction and some contempt. "Dat ain't no medal. Some king give me dat!"

*The Tale of the Man
Who Did Not Believe in Birthdays*



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XVI

HE WAS A SKEPTIC on birthdays; and when, among all the long procession of the gray days of his year, one of these bright, glittering spangle-days came toward him, he hastened to throw the gray of indifference about it. And when his friends came bearing their gifties for the anniversary, he took them and laid them away, paying back no coin in exchange. For know ye this: gifties are not ruffles, nor jewels, nor a bit feather for your bonnet. They are an offering of love for which these things stand as the physical tokens, and before they can be called accepted, they must be paid for with a wee bit love in return. And when they are not so justly paid, they become but ruffles and jewels and dirks which have no more than their value in the shops. And so that man is poor.

Now there is a magic. At certain times it comes about that one may take the love he has justly bought by fair exchange and with it buy friendships, using the gifts that come to him on his glittering spangle-days to purchase ornament for his gray days. That comes only at certain junctures. It comes when a bit birdie sings outside your window; it comes when a violet opens in your garden;

and it comes when from end of day a purple light rests upon you. Then you may use the treasure you have bought.

You will say these things happen every day. But sometimes they may not so happen until you are very old. For you must *hear* the bird; you must *see* the flower; you must *feel* the purple light; and it is astonishing to contemplate how rarely people do these things. To some a fresh exchange is possible every morning and every evening, but to some—especially men who do not believe in birthdays—it may not come for years.

Now this man of whom I speak went on bedimming his bright spangled birthdays until sixty and seven of them had passed. And then one day he went to his window to shut it because that accursed bird had disturbed his thoughts; and as he leaned out his eye caught sight of a wee blue flower just opening its petals, and, because he leaned out, the purple light fell across him. And it may be because these three things happened to him all at once, or it may be that his guardian angel was getting very sick of his job, but at any rate *he noticed*. And he noticed another thing: that he was getting very old.

Now remember, the magic had worked. He must no longer expect to have given him, with their tokens of gift, the bountifulness of love from those who wished him well. The magic was working. He must go to his storehouse and from the treasure therein buy back the love

he had given out. But he had given out none. The treasure of love given him by his friends had nothing it could buy back. The magic had worked; the tide was reversed. All the love that existed for him in the world he must have given in exchange before the magic had worked. He had given none. And the latter end of the Man-Who-Did-Not-Believe-in-Birthdays was very, very sad.

But our friend of today must believe well in birthdays, for the foreign exchange runs back and forth very fast. In his heart sings always the bird and blooms the violet; and in his soul is the light. The magic is always working.